MODERN INDIAN MYSTICISM

A comparative and critical study

SOBHARANI BASU

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Sobharani Ba[illegible]

Modern Indian Mysticism

A Comparative and Critical Study

by

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TRANSLITERATIONS

Vowels

अ = A , a

आ = Ā , ā

इ = I , i

ई = Ī , ī

उ = U , u

ऊ = Ū , ū

ऋ = Ṛ , ṛ

ऌ = Ḷ , ḷ

ए = E , e

ऐ = AI , ai

ओ = O , o

औ = AU , au

Consonants

क = KA , ka

ख = KHA , kha

ग = GA , ga

घ = GHA , gha

ङ = Ṅ , ṅ

च = CA , ca

छ = CHA , cha

ज = JA , ja

झ = JHA , jha

ञ = Ñ , ñ

ट = ṬA , ṭa

ठ = ṬHA , ṭha

ड = ḌA , ḍa

ढ = ḌHA , ḍha

ण = ṆA , ṇa

त = TA , ta

थ = THA , tha

द = DA , da

ध = DHA , dha

न = NA , na

प = PA , pa

फ = PHA , pha

ब	=	BA ,	ba
भ	=	BHA ,	bha
म	=	MA ,	ma
म्	=	M ,	m
य	=	YA ,	ya
र	=	RA ,	ra
ल	=	LA ,	la
व	=	VA ,	va
श	=	ŚA ,	śa
ष	=	ṢA ,	ṣa
स	=	SA ,	sa
ह	=	HA ,	ha
क्ष	=	KṢA ,	kṣa
त्र	=	TRA ,	tra
ज्ञ	=	JÑA ,	jña
ं	(*anusvāra*)	Ṁ ,	ṁ
ः	(*visarga*)	AḤ ,	aḥ
ऽ	(*avagraha*)		

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Volume Two

MYSTICS OF MODERN INDIA



Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahaṁsa
(1836 — 1886)

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Birth, Parentage, and Early Life :

Rāmakṛṣṇa, the world-renowned saint of Dakṣiṇeśvara, near Calcutta, was born in a poor Brāhmin family in the year 1836, in a sleepy and straggling village of Bengal named Kāmārpukur, in the district of Hooghly. His parents, Khudirāma Cattopādhyāya and Candrā Devī were exceptionally pure, simple-hearted and pious; they were the worshippers of their family deity, Rāmacandra known under the name of *Raghuvīra*. Rāmakṛṣṇa was the fourth child of his parents, the elder three being two brothers and a sister. His eldest brother, Rāmakumāra, was senior to him by about thirty-one years. Rāmakṛṣṇa was born at a comparatively old age of his parents. It is said that god Gadādhara,[1] appeared in a dream before his father who had gone on pilgrimage to that place and told him that He would take His birth in his family as his son. In course of time, when Rāmakṛṣṇa was born to Khudirāma, the child

1. A form of Viṣṇu presiding over the holy shrine of Gayā.

who came to be popularly known later as Rāmakṛṣṇa, was also called Gadādhara after the name of the deity appearing in a dream.

Gadādhara grew up into an extraordinary brilliant and meritorious boy. He combined in himself an endless store of fun and mischief with an extremely intelligent mind and a prodigious memory. The boy had a winning appearance and a feminine delicacy and grace about him. No wonder, he won the love and affection of his neighbours who used to listen with rapt attention to his sweet voice when he narrated stories from Hindu mythologies and the epics, which he had learnt from his father. Rāmakṛṣṇa's education began in the village school where he was marked out for his fondness for painting and clay-modelling of the figure of the gods and goddesses. Arithmetic, however, always repelled him.

Even in his early days, when he was only six years of age, Gadādhara showed signs of a spiritual fervour in him and had glimpses into the joys of an ecstatic and sublimated consciousness.

He lost his father at seven. This loss, which was the first bereavement in his life, made on his mind a deep impression as to the impermanence of this world and the vanity of all human wishes. He began to devote his attention more and more to a study of the religious stories in the epics and *Purāṇas* and to take a great interest in the society of the wandering monks and ascetics (*sādhus*) who happened to halt at Rāmakṛṣṇa's village, on their way to Purī, the holy seat of Lord Jagannātha. His love for the life

of an ascetic developed to such an extent that he began to put on himself, though only by way of imitation, the appearance of a *sannyāsin* by besmearing his body with ashes and in other similar ways.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Sacred Thread Ceremony (*Upanayana*) :

Gadādhara's sacred thread ceremony, *i.e.*, his holy initiation into the Brāhminic order, took place at the age of nine when he was permitted to conduct a personal and formal worship of *Raghuvīra*, his family deity. He now began to discharge all the duties of a Brāhmin as enjoined by the holy books. In other words, he now daily recited the Vedic *mantra* of *gāyatrī*[2] for a fixed number of times at the appointed hours. This was his first training as it were, in worship and meditation.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Bhāva-samādhi :

The little boy had a great sensibility, physical as well as psychical and a susceptibility to a temporary loss of outer consciousness caused by intensified emotion (*bhāva*). This is what technically goes by the name of *bhāva-samādhi*. For the second time, he had

2. The *gāyatrī* is a Vedic *mantra* which it is incumbent on the part of a Brāhmin to recite thrice during a twenty-four hour day.

this ecstatic mood, when he was on the way to the temple of *Viśālākṣī*, the presiding deity of another village called Ānur. His mother who accompanied him could not appreciate this state of her son's mind and took it to be a sort of fit or some mental disease. The boy protested, saying that he got this state of mind as a result of his constant meditation on and deep thinking of the Goddess whom he was going to visit.[3]

When he was still a boy, Gadādhara once solved a great religious problem at an assembly of learned men who were debating over it. The latter were highly impressed by the prodigious intelligence of the little boy.

After the investiture of the sacred thread, Gadādhara was admitted into the worship of the deity *Raghuvīra* and he used to spend more of his time in meditation and prayer. He had his *bhāva-samādhi* for the third time when he was to play the role of *Śiva* in a *yātrā* performance, (an indigenous histrionic *genre* peculiar to Bengal) arranged on the night of the *Śiva-rātri* festival.[4] What happened to the boy was that he forgot everything about the performance and the role he was donning in it and got intensely absorbed in the meditation of lord *Śiva*. He became absolutely impervious to all outer consciousness.[5]

3. R.L., II. p. 43.

4. The holy night which is thought to be auspicious for the worship of *Śiva*.

5. R.L., I. p. 49.

From that time onwards Gadādhara used to have frequent onsets of such ecstatic states till the end of his life.

Education in Calcutta :

Gadādhara's eldest brother, Rāmakumāra, had been living at Calcutta from 1850, as the founder of a small, private Saṁskrit school of the old type (*tol*), where students were given free education and free board. He was a Saṁskrit scholar and wanted that his younger brother, Gadādhara, should also be educated along the same lines. With this object in view, in 1855 he took Gadādhara with him to Calcutta, and began to teach him Saṁskrit. But Gadādhara's mind was of a different cast. He took very little interest in his studies and had no love for bread-winning (*cāla-kalā-vidyā*) education for subsistence.

After a stay of five years at Calcutta, in 1866 Rāmakumāra found for himself an appointment as the priest (*pūjārī*) of the goddess *Kālī*, in the newly founded temple endowed by Rānī Rāsamaṇi of Dakṣiṇeśvara, on the bank of Ganges, near Calcutta. It was a relatively lucrative job. In consequence of this, Rāmakumāra, with his brother Gadādhara, shifted to Dakṣiṇeśvara. Rāmakumāra died shortly afterwards, and was succeeded by his younger brother, Gadādhara, as the priest of the temple. Gadādhara had already been initiated in the *śakti mantra* by one Kenārāma Bhaṭṭācārya, so that there could no longer be any formal objection to

Gadādhara's conducting the daily worship of the Mother Goddess.

Rāmakṛṣṇa as a Priest in the Kālī Temple of Dakṣiṇeśvara :

Though in his earlier life, Gadādhara's innate mystic nature had revealed itself from time to time, it was only after his appointment as the priest in the Dakṣiṇeśvara Temple that an opportunity came to him for the systematic cultivation of his devotional and mystical sensibilities. This discipline reached its perfection in course of time, and as a result the fervent-hearted young priest gradually bloomed into a genuine devotee (*bhakta*) of the Divine Mother, and a great mystic. Rānī Rāsamaṇi and her son-in-law, Mathura Nath Biswas, who as a trustee of the Temple Committee was one of its supervisors, were highly impressed with the spiritual fervour and devotion of the newly appointed priest. This impression, it may be added, grew deeper and deeper with the passage of time, as Gadādhara's God-intoxicated soul climbed up stage by stage towards the heights of the supreme Divine Realisation.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Sādhanā in Pañcavaṭī Garden :

The worship of the Goddess *Kālī* by Gadādhara was a sight to see. Streams of tears would flow down his cheeks when, absolutely forgetful of all outward existence, he sang to the Divine Mother.

The deep spiritual craving which was thus awakened in Gadādhara's heart through his worship of the Mother Goddess, inspired him with a desire to set himself on a deeper quest for God-realisation; and to this end he selected a remote, lonely, and out-of-the-way place in a bush within the boundary limits of the temple garden, where he resolved to practise a regular and single-minded *sādhanā* to propitiate the Goddess. This place has, since then been known to the devotees of the great saint, as the famous *Pañcavaṭī*. Thus he began to spend hours, engrossed in singing the devotional songs of well-known devotees like Kamalākānta and Rāmaprasāda, through which he sent out his own prayers to the great Goddess. His nephew, who was in attendance upon him, in many ways tried to dissuade him from his *sādhanā*, but in vain.

Once the intensity of his ardour so worked him up, that he was almost determined to put an end to his life with the dagger which the Goddess held in her hand. It is said that when he was almost about to snatch it from the Mother's hand, She revealed Herself to him in a vision, the resultant tension of which made Gadādhara lose his consciousness. Subsequent to this first visionary revelation, Gadādhara felt even more the pangs of separation between him and the Mother *Kālī*. Life was unbearable to him; there within his body he felt the burning heat of a great fire, consuming him completely. But the fire was put out and disappeared, just as he succeeded in isolating the Arch-Sin (*pāpa-puruṣa*) within him, and then destroying it completely.

When under these circumstances it became no longer possible for Rāmakṛṣṇa to attend to his routine duties, the temple authorities, who had a great respect for his religious convictions, sympathised with him and relieved him of his routine work.

His Marriage :

Thinking that marriage might restore Gadādhara's mind to its normal condition, his mother got him married in 1859 to a sweet and decent girl of five, named Sāradāmaṇi, the daughter of Rāmacandra Mukhopādhāya, who lived in a neighbouring village. Gadādhara married, indeed, at the instance of his mother, but his relation with his wife remained as pure as ever, uncontaminated by any sexual desire. He looked upon all women as the incarnations of the Divine Mother, and his wife was no exception to it.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Different Courses of Sādhanā :

While at Dakṣiṇeśvara, Gadādhara practised different paths of spiritual discipline (*sādhanā*), including the *Tāntrika*, *Vaiṣṇava*, and the *Vedāntic* in succession, after which he attained Perfect Illumination. The *Tāntrika* part of the *sādhanā* was performed during 1862 and 1864, under the guidance of a saintly woman called Bhairavī. About the year 1864, he practised another course of *sādhanā*, in which God

isworshi pped as a child under the devotee's paternal affection for Him. In his pursuit of this course, Gadādhara was guided by a wandering monk named Jaṭādhārī who was a votary of Rāmacandra, the incarnation of God, and the hero of the great epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In 1865 he practised the path of knowledge under Totāpurī, an itinerant monk of the monistic school, who taught him the non-dualistic philosophy.

Gadādhara, in this way, realised the undifferentiated Absolute as the highest Reality, after he had duly taken *sannyāsa* from Totāpurī, his teacher. It was Totāpurī who gave him the name, RĀMAKṚṢṆA. Towards the end of 1866, he also practised the spiritual disciplines of Islām under a Moslem teacher, Govinda Rāya, also dressing himself as a Moslem and repeating the name of Allāh. Having thus followed his course of *sādhanā*, in 1868 Rāmakṛṣṇa went on a pilgrimage to the different holy places in North India, *e.g.*, Vaidyanātha, Vārānasī, Prayāga (Allahabad), Mathurā, Vṛndāvana, Gayā, etc. He returned to Dakṣiṇeśvara in 1869. In 1874, with the desire to learn the truth of Christianity, Rāmakṛṣṇa began to listen to readings from the Bible by one Śambhu Caraṇa Mullick. So deeply stirred was he, that he had a vision of Jesus Christ during this period.

His Disciples :

With his spiritual attainments becoming fairly well-known among the people, very soon a large

circle of devotees and disciples began to flock round him, among whom the most remarkable in many ways was Narendra Nath Dutta, who later on came to be known as Svāmī Vivekānanda. Narendra Nath, later on as Svāmī Vivekānanda, preached the message of his master all over the world. It was he again, who, as the great disciple of Rāmakṛṣṇa, represented India and delivered a remarkable discourse on Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893.

Rāmakṛṣṇa was greatly revered not only by those who belonged to the conservative school — men like Pandit Śaśadhara Tarkacuḍāmaṇi — but also by the ardent modernists like Keśava Candra Sen, Vijayakṛṣṇa Gosvāmin, and others.

His Passing Away :

Rāmakṛṣṇa passed away while in a state of *samādhi*, in 1886, at Cossipore, leaving behind him a host of devotees and disciples. After his death, a missionary organisation called the Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission was started by his followers.

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Rāmakṛṣṇa's Life of Sādhanā :

Conforming to the demands of the traditional spiritual culture, Rāmakṛṣṇa approached, as has

already been stated, one Pandit Kenārāma Bhaṭṭā-cārya, a *Tāntrika* worshipper of the *Śakti* cult, and received initiation from him according to the forms prescribed in the scriptures (*śāstras*). Soon after his initiation, he was engaged as a priest in the temple of *Kālī*. It seems that this engagement proved a turning point in his spiritual career, for, his deep spiritual hunger for a direct realisation of Divine Life asserted itself in his mind, and began to dominate it in all its preoccupations.

Rāmakṛṣṇa felt like a little child in the presence of the Mother, of whose existence he was dimly aware and whom he yearned to visualise in a concrete form with all the ardour of a seeker's soul. He performed the worship, more according to the dictates of his loving heart, anxious for a true vision and service of the Mother, than the rules laid down in formal codes. Sincerity and earnestness were the characteristics of his nature; and when the intensity of longing was at its highest, it was impossible for him to bear the pangs of separation. Life lost all its joys and seemed to be deprived of its significance; and the world appeared to him like a wilderness until he could have a vision of the Mother, even if it were a mere glimpse. Day after day and night after night passed, and there appeared to be no prospect of a fulfilment of his inmost desire. He had great faith, almost an unshakable one, in the grace of the Mother, so that in spite of his recurring disappointments, he never lost hope, though hope deferred continually made his hear sick.

His First Vision and Experience :

One day being unable to stand any more his painful separation from the Mother, he made up his mind to put an end to his life; and with this object took hold of the sword hanging in the hand of the Mother's image, when all of a sudden a wonderful vision unfolded itself to him. What happened may be best described in his own words :

> A sword was hanging in the sanctuary of Kālī. My eyes fell upon it and I seized it like a mad man to put an end to my life. And lo ! the entire scene — doors, windows and the temple itself — vanished. It seemed as if nothing existed any more. Instead, I saw an ocean of the Spirit, boundless and dazzling. In whatever direction I turned, great luminous waves were rising. They bore down upon me with an unimaginable tumult, as if to swallow me up. In an instant they were upon me. They broke over me, they engulfed me completely. I was suffocated. I lost consciousness and I fell. How I passed that day and the next I know not. Round me rolled an ocean of ineffable joy. And in the depths of my being I was conscious of the majestic presence of the Divine Mother.[6]

The effect of this ecstatic vision lasted for two days, after which Rāmakṛṣṇa got up with the word 'Mother' on his lips.

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6. R.L., I. p. 38; Also quoted in *The Life of Ramakrishna* by Romain Rolland, pp. 37-38.

The vision of the Mother was, as might be expected, a very short-lived one. It threw Rāmakṛṣṇa into transports of joy; but as soon as he came back to normal consciousness, the memory of the past joy made him feel the separation all the more keenly. Having experienced this bliss of beatific union, even if it was only momentary, he began to feel the pangs of separation with far greater intensity than he had felt before. Like a child he cried aloud invoking the Mother in tones vibrating with the anguish of his heart.

In the spiritual world no value is ever lost; and what is once gained is retained as a permanent possession, even though the keenness of the original impression is apparently reduced with the lapse of time. As a matter of fact, in Rāmakṛṣṇa's case a faint glimpse of the face of the Mother always haunted him in memory and sent thrills of joy through his heart, even when he was immersed in the shadows of gloom. Besides, the psyche of the saint had already undergone a transmutation, due to his experiences so far, for, he used to observe from time to time luminous waves rising up and surrounding him in all directions. This was in moments when the mind was occupied with the outer world.

When, however, Rāmakṛṣṇa sat down in meditation, he began to notice a decided change in his mental state. He heard distinctly certain sounds in his several joints and vital organs of the body, and had a strange sense as if these had been deliberately locked in by somebody and made impervious to the impulses of the external world. At such moments the motor

activities of the system ceased altogether and his body was kept motionless and stiff. This condition lasted for different periods of time on different occasions; and finally it was observed that as soon as he heard those sounds in the reverse order, he felt that the joints were unlocked, and his body regained its flexibility and power of movement.

In the course of a few days, Rāmakṛṣṇa began to feel that the Mother's image was not a mere image made of inert matter, but was imbued with life and capable of responding, as a mother in relation to her child, to his feelings. He was so confident of the spirituality of the image that he thought he could notice, by placing a piece of cotton into the nostrils of the image, the very process of breathing itself; and for this, neither meditation nor trance was needed. He also used to hear, before retiring to bed, the tinkling of the Mother's anklets. On occasions he actually felt the presence of the Mother moving about like a young girl on the terrace of the Temple.

As a result of this intimate spiritual experience, Rāmakṛṣṇa unconsciously passed beyond the limits of ceremonial devotion (*vaidhī-bhakti*), and had his heart filled with the refreshing sweetness carried by the order of true divine love (*parā-bhakti*) welling up from within. The vision of the Mother actually partaking of offerings placed before Her was frequent. His relation with the Mother became so intimate that most of his dealings with Her became enigmatical to the eyes of the world, which could not properly appreciate them.

In view of his mental condition, the authorities of the Temple thought it wise to relieve him of his priestly responsibilities by engaging one of his relatives in his place, and gave him a free scope for spiritual development along his own lines.

His Worship of Raghuvīra and Vision of Sītā :

Inspired with confidence at the sight of Mother *Kālī*, Rāmakṛṣṇa's spirit now turned towards his family deity *Raghuvīra*. He hungered to have a vision of His form too. The greatest devotee of Rāmacandra being Mahāvīra, also called Hanumāna, he began to meditate on the latter and tried to feel his identity with Him. In the course of a few days after this meditation, Rāmakṛṣṇa, in a waking condition, is said to have been blessed with the vision of *Sītā*, the consort of Rāmacandra, apparently in a human form. The vision lasted for a short while; and before he could prostrate himself at the feet of the Goddess, the vision disappeared, and it seemed to him as if mysteriously the Goddess had entered his own body.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Tāntrika-sādhanā under Bhairavī :

It is clear from what has been said above that Rāmakṛṣṇa, through the intensity of his devotion and love, had attained a sufficiently high level of spiritual elevation; as a result of this he had a direct vision of the Divine in His aspects as *Kālī*

and *Sītā*, as forms of the Universal Mother. But even this high advancement failed to satisfy the inmost cravings of his soul, for he felt that in spite of these visions which were so real to him, his heart's desire remained still unfulfilled. The fact is that mere visions, however exalted, do not have the power to transform the soul and bestow upon it permanent peace.

The greatest necessity for a true spiritual pilgrim is the awakening of the dormant spiritual power (*kula-kuṇḍalinī*) under the guidance of a competent *guru*. Rāmakṛṣṇa, no doubt, had the benefit of a *guru* ; but a *sadguru* capable of infusing divine energy into the system was felt to be an urgent need for the realisation of his life's ideal. No true spiritual activity is possible unless the aforesaid power, lying dormant and coiled up at the base of the spine, is roused into activity and made to function properly.[7] Rāmakṛṣṇa's *kuṇḍalinī* had not yet been roused, and his next concern was, therefore, to see this power brought into vigorous activity in the interest of his spiritual regeneration.

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7. It is well known that the awakening of Rāmakṛṣṇa's *kuṇḍalinī* took place sometime in 1862 in the course of his *Tāntrika-sādhanā* (R.L., II. pp. 206-207). It thus follows that Rāmakṛṣṇa's vision of the Mother, which had preceded the advent of the Bhairavī by about six years, had not much to do with this awakening. Assuming, however, the correctness of Rāmakṛṣṇa's statement that no divine vision is possible until the *kuṇḍalinī* has been awakened, it is difficult to interpret the nature and significance of Rāmakṛṣṇa's first vision of the Mother.

The best way to work up *kuṇḍalinī* is through the *Tāntrika* process, the secrets of which are usually kept back from the knowledge of the world. But fortunately for Rāmakṛṣṇa an opportunity presented itself for his being initiated as it were into the mysteries of the secret culture and reaping its benefit.

An elderly Brāhmin lady named Yogeśvarī Bhairavī well versed in the *Tāntrika* culture came to Dakṣiṇeśvara in the year 1862. She gave out that she, under the Almighty's behest, had to meet three persons, of whom Rāmakṛṣṇa was one. This meeting of Rāmakṛṣṇa with the Bhairavī was a source of joy to both of them and marked the turning of a new leaf in Rāmakṛṣṇa's spiritual career. It is evident that the Bhairavī came there with the definite mission of guiding Rāmakṛṣṇa on to the path of the *Tāntrika-sādhanā*. She was greatly impressed with the high spiritual qualities of Rāmakṛṣṇa, the qualities being those that were deemed as the essential preliminaries in all true spiritual culture.

In the present context, it will be of little use if we go into the details of this *sādhanā*. But it may be of some interest to note that the Bhairavī procured all the ingredients necessary for the ceremonies and planned out everything, after which she directed Rāmakṛṣṇa to go through the various processes. Two specially sacred seats (*āsana*)[8] were prepared for

8. These refer to the two distinct altars which Rāmakṛṣṇa got prepared for his use. The seat under the *bela* tree was

the purpose, one in the *Pañcavaṭī*, and the other near the northern boundary of the temple-garden. The usual course consisted of worship (*pūjā*), followed by the silent incantation of *mantra* (*japa*) and by meditation (*dhyāna*), in successive order, and then the culmination in *samādhi*.

It is believed that the attainment of perfection in monistic *Brahmajñāna* involves, according to the *Tantras*, a fusion of the complementary elements of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. And in accordance with this belief, it is considered necessary for the *puruṣa* to be in close touch with *prakṛti*, but as a child on the lap of its mother, with a view to drawing forth and assimilating the spiritual current working in the body of the *prakṛti*. It is indispensable in this *sādhanā* that the *puruṣa* should feel himself like a child and should not allow his mind to be disturbed in the least by the contact with the *prakṛti*. This indeed represents the highest perfection in celibacy, or more correctly, in gaining a complete control over the sex instincts and desires (*brahmacarya*). Rāmakṛṣṇa gave ample evidence of his having gained this perfection.

Besides, there are several other acts enjoined in the *Tantras* which have to be gone through by the *sādhaka* in order to establish himself in absolute purity, implying freedom from a sense of shyness,

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known as *trimuṇḍa-āsana*, while the other seat on the north was the well-known *pañcamuṇḍa-āsana*. We do not think it necessary to give here details about the composition of each of the *āsanas*.

delicacy, disgust or aversion.[9] It is not known which particular aspect of the *Tāntrika-sādhanā* Rāmakṛṣṇa was made to follow, though it is mentioned that the Bhairavī instructed him in the essentials of the teaching of the sixty-four *Tantras*.[10]

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9. We know of several religious sects in India among whom the use of human flesh, collected from a rotten or burning corpse, is prescribed as a pre-condition of success. This, rather a repulsive ritual, is evidently intended to test the equanimity and unperturbed nature of the *sādhaka*'s mind. The *Kāpālika, Aghora*, and numerous other sects encourage such rituals as a qualification for a transition into the higher spheres. Rāmakṛṣṇa did not belong to any of these sects and possessed an absolutely open mind and a life of superlative purity. But he too was required to pass through this ordeal under the guidance of the Bhairavī. There is no doubt that he went through the *Tāntrika* rituals with absolute success.

10. R.L., II. p. 199.

It is believed that the sixty-four *Bhairava Āgamas* which issued from the *yoginī* face of *Śiva* were non-dualistic, the ten *Śaiva Āgamas* were dualistic, and the eighteen *Raudra Āgamas* were of a mixed character (see Jayaratha on *Tantrāloka* 1, 18). There is a reference to sixty-four *Tantras* in Śaṅkara's *Saundarya-laharī*. Lakṣmīdhara's commentary gives a list of the names.

The sixty-four *Tantras* enumerated in Lakṣmidhara's commentary on *Saundarya-laharī*, verse 31, are as follows :

1. *Mahāmāyāśambara*
2. *Yoginījālaśambara*
3. *Tattvaśambara*
4. *Siddhabhairava*
5. *Baṭukabhairava*
6. *Kaṅkālabhairava*
7. *Kālabhairava*
8. *Kālāgnibhairava*
9. *Yoginībhairava*
10. *Mahābhairava*
11. *Śaktibhairava*
12. *Brāhmī*
13. *Māheśvarī*
14. *Kaumārī*
15. *Vaiṣṇavī*
16. *Vārāhī*
17. *Māhendrī*
18. *Cāmuṇḍā*

That Rāmakṛṣṇa passed through *vīra-bhāva-sādhanā* and reached the stage of *divya-bhāva*,[11] is an admitted

19. *Śivadūtī*
20. *Brahmayāmala*
21. *Viṣṇuyāmala*
22. *Rudrayāmala*
23. *Lakṣmīyāmala*
24. *Umāyāmala*
25. *Skandayāmala*
26. *Gaṇeśayāmala*
27. *Grahayāmala*
28. *Candrajñāna*
29. *Mālinī*
30. *Mahāsammohana*
31. *Vāmajuṣṭa*
32. *Mahādeva*
33. *Vātula*
34. *Vātulottara*
35. *Hṛdbheda*
36. *Tantrabheda*
37. *Guhya*
38. *Kāmika*
39. *Kalāvāda*
40. *Kalāsāra*
41. *Kuṇḍikā*
42. *Matottara*
43. *Vīṇākhya*
44. *Trotala*
45. *Trotalottara*
46. *Pañcāmṛta*
47. *Rūpabheda*
48. *Bhūtoḍḍāmara*
49. *Kulasāra*
50. *Kuloḍḍīśa*
51. *Kulacūḍāmaṇi*
52. *Sarvajñānottara*
53. *Mahākālī*
54. *Aruṇeśa*
55. *Modinīśa*
56. *Vikuṇṭheśvara*
57. *Pūrva*
58. *Paścima*
59. *Dakṣa*
60. *Uttara*
61. *Niruttara*
62. *Vimala*
63. *Vimalottha*
64. *Devīmata*

Other lists are found in *Sarvollāsa Tantra* and *Vāmakeśvara Tantras*.

It is certainly not fair to say that all the sixty-four *Tantras* were current in Bengal, specially during the days of Rāmakṛṣṇa, as the number is differently stated in the different authoritative works on the subject. It is certainly not easy at all to ascertain the truth of a particular author's statement. But even if any of these authorities be accepted as reliable, there is no evidence that the courses of *sādhanā*, as enjoined by these sixty-four *Tantras*, were current in Bengal in the days of Rāmakṛṣṇa.

11. R.L., II. p. 200.

fact, though it is not known in exactly what manner it was accepted by Rāmakṛṣṇa, during the period of the Bhairavī's spiritual regime. We hear of his having gone through the crowning achievement of a *Tāntrika-sādhaka*'s pursuit of the spiritual path (*pūrṇābhiṣeka*), but without any particulars regarding the methods of its formal observance. In later years, while talking to his disciples, Rāmakṛṣṇa used to say that the *Tāntrika-sādhanā* had the effect of transforming his entire nature, revolutionising his outlook. Thereafter he came to look upon every woman as a mother and upon himself as her child. No other feeling or urge stirred his heart in front of a young woman.

Rāmakṛṣṇa gives a vivid description of the manner in which the psycho-spiritual centres in him, till now lying dormant, were roused into vigorous activity. Every centre is represented by a lotus, symbolising the form of *prakṛti* embodied in man. Rāmakṛṣṇa saw distinctly that a human form resembling his own, though of a miniature size, entered his body and began to gambol at each of the lotus-centres, as a result of which each lotus opened up its petals, to blossom into a full-bloomed flower gleaming in the flood of light coming from higher sources. It was a quick process and was repeated at each of the seven primary centres. This was the awakening of his *kuṇḍalinī*; it brought about the break of the soul's agelong torpor and spiritual bankruptcy, and marked in fact, the termination of the animal attitude (*paśu-bhāva*) and the inauguration of the heroic attitude (*vīra-bhāva*). A true hero is one who has mastered nature or *prakṛti*.

This mastery involves a state of perfect assimilation of the complementary elements, without which the *sādhaka* cannot reach the state of equilibrium of *prakṛti*. It is thus clear that a close and tense coming to grips with *prakṛti* is essential in this stage for a *Tāntrika-sādhaka*.

Rāmakṛṣṇa also had to pass through this stage, but his relation with *prakṛti*, or its earthly symbol, a companion of the opposite sex, was that of a child to its mother, as we have already pointed out earlier. This marks him out not merely as a *sādhaka* but a *vīra-sādhaka*, and distinguishes him from others of a similar type, whose relation with *prakṛti* or the female partner is supposed to be more intimate.

The period of *Tāntrika-sādhanā* was, in fact, the most glorious period of Rāmakṛṣṇa's spiritual life. For, besides the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī* mentioned above, he passed through a series of rich, variegated and fruitful experiences during this time. He had visions of the goddesses described in the scriptures, some of whom addressed him and talked to him, too. Of all the divine forms that were unfolded before him, that of *Ṣoḍaśī* or *Rājarājeśvarī* appeared to him to be the most beautiful. He saw with naked eyes the great symbol of creation (*brahma-yoni*) as a vast luminous triangle or triangular form, out of which hundreds of worlds were momentarily emerging. On another occasion, he had the vision of *Māyā* in the form of an exquisitely beautiful woman, rising out of the Ganges, giving birth to a child, fondling and nursing it. Then all of a sudden, assuming a terrible mien, she devoured her offspring

and then disappeared in the river. Moreover, it was often that Rāmakṛṣṇa's ears caught the celestial notes of *anāhata nāda*, a capacity which is one of the best rewards of a perfect *Tāntrika-sādhaka*.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Five Forms of Bhakti-sādhanā :

After he had completed his course of *Tāntrika-sādhanā* under the direction of the Bhairavī, Rāmakṛṣṇa turned his attention to the path of devotion (*bhakti*) on the lines of the medieval *Vaiṣṇava* tradition. It is said that he had, during this period, personal experiences of the paths prescribed by some of the minor religious cults of Bengal. But the most important course of *sādhanā* after the *Tāntrika* period was the one enjoined in *Vaiṣṇavism*, followed by *Advaita-sādhanā*. The *Vaiṣṇavas*, as we know, hold that the path of *bhakti*, to be pursued in the correct way, should be based on a recognition of the relation between the devotee and the object of his devotion.

Among the five forms of *bhakti*, *śānta-bhakti* occupies the first place, in the sense that the gradation of *bhakti* starts with *śānti* or peace and ends with *mādhurya* or intimacy. As to Rāmakṛṣṇa's cultivation of this form, we have very insufficient data to be able to say that Rāmakṛṣṇa pursued this initial path in *bhakti*. Some biographers and commentators have indeed expressed the belief that the vision of the Mother, as seen by Rāmakṛṣṇa, represented this state of culture. But to be fair, we must say that this was far away from the *śānta-bhāva* of Vaiṣṇavism. As regards the

next attitude, called *dāsya* (implying the attitude of a servant to his master) we have an illustration of it in Rāmakṛṣṇa's worship of *Raghuvīra* on the same lines as the worship of Rāma performed by Hanumāna, and glowingly recorded in the great epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. Rāmakṛṣṇa identified himself with Mahāvīra or Hanumāna in his worship of *Raghuvīra*. The subsequent attitude of friendship or comradeship or *sakhya-bhāva* was developed by him after the *Tāntrika-sādhanā* was over. In this stage, as in all previous stages, he did not approach the object of his devotion as a human being with all the idiosyncracies and limitations incidental to humanity. On the contrary, he tried to set up an identity between himself and one of the eternal companions of *Kṛṣṇa*, *i.e.*, Śrīdāma, Sudāma, and others.

Worship of Rāmalālā under Jaṭādhārī; Rāmakṛṣṇa's Vātsalya-bhāva-sādhanā :

The above practice was followed by a stage of progress in *bhakti* in which the Divine Being was taken as a child demanding one's tender and affectionate attention. In 1864, a *Vaiṣṇava* monk of the *Rāmāyata* order, named Jaṭādhārī,[12] came to Dakṣiṇeśvara. This saint used to worship the deity in the form of Rāma, which was an image of alloy (*aṣṭadhātu*) representing Rāmacandra as a child. This image was known as Rāmalālā. The monk, seized with a divine rapture, saw the image as a living child on

12. Etymologically, one with the matted hair.

whom he bestowed all his tender care, love and affection. Rāmakṛṣṇa, deeply susceptible to such inspired affection, was charmed by the beauty of this sweet relation, and succeeded in identifying himself with the devotee by his attitude of parental affection (*vātsalya*).

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Mādhurya-bhāva-sādhanā :

It may be presumed that Rāmakṛṣṇa's *Tāntrika-sādhanā*, in the course of which he experienced the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī* within him, was not a mere experiment in mystical art, but represented the process of an intense spiritualisation of his nature. A man as such, is, as it were, in a customary manner bound by a sense of *puruṣakāra* — he considers himself a *puruṣa* and looks upon *prakṛti* as an instrument or object of his enjoyment. He is unmindful of the fact that in his gross mundane state he is far from being a *puruṣa*, and that to become a true *puruṣa* he must pass through a stage of *prakṛti*. In Rāmakṛṣṇa's case, the perfection in *Tāntrika-sādhanā* helped to reveal and bring to the forefront the *prakṛti* side of his nature. If this is understood correctly, it may be possible to explain his *vātsalya-bhāva* (in relation to Rāmalālā) as that of a mother to her child. Later on, however, it became more and more pronounced. He considered himself, it is well known, as one of the female companions of the Mother Goddess (*Jagadambā*) and began to serve Her exactly as such. During this period he donned a woman's clothes and with a

cāmara[13] in the right hand, used to remain standing as an attendant before the Great Mother, dancing from time to time and waving the *cāmara* as if it were to fan the Goddess.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Sakhya-bhāva-sādhanā; His Attainment of Mahābhāva :

Thus, in the next stage, we find Rāmakṛṣṇa still in his *prakṛti* aspect, playing the role of a female companion, invoking the presence of one of the eight playmates (*aṣṭa-sakhis*) of *Rādhā*, the divine consort of *Kṛṣṇa*. When, due to his intense longing and aspiration, he succeeded in having a vision of the *sakhi*, he used to implore her to help him in having access to *Rādhā*, the prototype of *Mahābhāva* or the supreme Divine Love. In due course of time he was able, not only to feel the presence of *Rādhā*, but to see Her actually and to become identified with Her. This was a state of wonderful spiritual repletion — a state in which Rāmakṛṣṇa, bearing upon him all the exhilaration and elevation of *mahābhāva*, longed for the vision of *Kṛṣṇa* just as a lover in separation does for the union with his beloved. This was the time when his nature as *prakṛti*, established through *Tāntrika-sādhanā* and developed through successive stages of *Vaiṣṇava* culture, was to be consummated through the attainment of the Supreme *Puruṣa* (*parama-puruṣa*). He had a vision of *Kṛṣṇa* and enjoyed His presence in infin-

13. A hand-fan made of peacock-feather or animal hair.

itely diverse ways. His outer life during this stage reflected his inner mood, and it is well known as a fact that he even used to dress himself during this period (of nearly six months) as a woman and lived in the society of women.

All the highest experiences of love, of which we find accounts in the standard works of *Vaiṣṇava* mysticism, came in the most intense manner to Rāmakṛṣṇa; and there is no doubt that the raptures and joys of *mahābhāva* contributed a good deal towards the realisation of the heights of Divine Glory. Rāmakṛṣṇa had achieved it through a progressive transcendence through the different stages (*bhāvas*). In this process he had drunk deep at the founts of both the finite and the Infinite, and had come to achieve an establishment of the Self in its own unspeakable serenity. This was the state of *advaita* to which we now turn.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Advaita-sādhan under Totāpurī :

From what has been stated in the foregoing lines it is evident that Rāmakṛṣṇa attained perfection in *mahābhāva*, and in the realisation of *Brahman* in its aspect of *Iāśvara*. The vision of *Kṛṣṇa* marked in a way the end of his great spiritual pilgrimage, viz., the attainment of the auspicious Divine Principle as the Supreme Being. What remained for him to achieve now was to plunge beyond the Personal God into the infinite ocean of the Absolute, above all traces of personality, qualities, actions and forms. This called for a supreme

effort, and Rāmakṛṣṇa did not fail to put forth the best in him when the occasion demanded it.

It is stated that one Totāpurī, an itinerant monk of the *daśanāmī*[14] order of Śaṅkarācārya, halted for a short time at Dakṣiṇeśvara on his way back to Punjab, his native province, after a trip of pilgrimage. He was a monist of very superlative order : one who

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14. Every *sannyāsin* belongs to the ancient monastic order which was recognised in its present form by Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. In addition to his name, usually ending in *ānanda,* the *sannyāsin* takes a title which indicates his formal connection with one of the ten subdivisions of the order of *sannyāsins,* called *daśanāmīs.* These ten agnomens are : *tīrtha, āśrama, vana, āraṇya, giri, parvata, sāgara, sarasvatī, bhāratī,* and *purī.*

Each of these names indicates some spiritual qualities as stated below :

(*i*) *Tīrtha* : One who has realised the true meaning of the great *Vedāntic* saying (*mahāvākya*) "That Thou Art".

(*ii*) *Āśrama* : One who is free from the cycle of birth and death and is well-established in the *sannyāsa āśrama.*

(*iii*) *Vana* : One who lives in forest and is free from desires.

(*iv*) *Āraṇya* : One who has cut asunder the bonds of the world.

(*v*) *Giri* : One whose intellect is as steadfast as a mountain.

(*vi*) *Parvata* : One who has realised the ephemeral nature of the world and lives at the base of a mountain.

(*vii*) *Sāgara* : One who has delved deep into the ocean of knowledge.

(*viii*) *Sarasvatī* : One who is well-established in the discriminating knowledge.

(*ix*) *Bhāratī* : One who, having become free from all obligations, rejoices in the knowledge of *Brahman.*

(*x*) *Purī* : One who has obtained the true knowledge of the Self and is well established in *Brahman.*

was said to have attained perfection through continuous efforts for nearly forty years of his life. As he was an advocate of *Advaita Vedānta*, he held worldly existence, in all its aspects, as illusion. He supported the doctrine of the pure Unity of Being, in which there is no scope for the play of emotion or action. Being at Dakṣiṇeśvara, he naturally came in close touch with Rāmakṛṣṇa and considered him an admirable receptacle for the transmission of his monistic wisdom.

In his anxiety to communicate *Brahmajñāna* to Rāmakṛṣṇa, Totāpurī advised him to adopt a life of renunciation (*sannyāsa*) by giving up all the symbols of the worldly life of a householder and all worldly attachments. The ceremonial formalities of *sannyāsa*, together with *virojāhoma*[15] and other details, had also to be gone through as a matter of course. In the end, Totāpurī gave a deep and wise exhortation to his disciple on the unreality of the world and on the exclusive reality of the unqualified *Brahman*. He commanded Rāmakṛṣṇa to sit in meditation and banish from his mind all thoughts of duality and relativity and make it calm and free from activity. In this way he could dispense with the mind altogether as an organ of thought, and rest in the unity of the Self.

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15. This is a religious performance in which the subject has to perform his own last rites and pay offerings to his own departed dead, as is done in a Hindu *śrāddha* ceremony. This ceremony, which is a stepping stone to *sannyāsa*, symbolises the subject's complete renunciation of all worldly ties.

Rāmakṛṣṇa in a State of Nirvikalpa Samādhi :

Rāmakṛṣṇa had already been accustomed to *samādhi* and was not a stranger to the process of mental concentration. Having received his *guru*'s instruction, he seriously set about withdrawing the mind completely from the external world. He collected his worldly thoughts, and sought by every means within his power to rise above them into the absolute silence of Eternity. In spite of his efforts, however, he found to his chagrin that he could not go beyond the mind and realise the undisturbed peace of *nirvikalpa samādhi*. As soon as his mind reached the point of concentration, it came face to face with the glorious form of the Mother, which permeated it and refused to disappear. When all his attempts failed, he lost all hopes of the Supreme Realisation and communicated his helplessness to his master. Totāpurī insisted on a fresh attempt and inspired him with the confidence that ultimate success would be his.

Rāmakṛṣṇa, accordingly, proceeded now "with the iron in his soul," once more along the path of abstraction. Now, at last, success smiled on him. He was able to do away with the thought of the Mother, through the force of *jñāna*. The unruffled state of Pure Consciousness shining in its own peerless light, above and beyond all the ripples of the thought-world, was then realised by him. He felt like a man possessed, so great was the impact of this wonderful experience upon him. It is said that he continued in this state, the state of *nirvikalpa samādhi*, for a period of three days and nights. In this state

of *samādhi* all the activities of the organism — sensory, motor, mental and vital were suspended, and even the reflex actions and the various organic activities intended to keep the body alive were totally inhibited. Whatever he had, came to rest. All the activities like respiration, thinking, etc., ceased altogether. The egoistic sense which lies behind all mental phenomena was no longer felt. What was left behind was not the old personal consciousness with its distinct individuality, but only a wide expanse of infinite consciousness free from the limitation of subject and object and, at the same time, self-effulgent in its eternal splendour.

It is accepted by all those who know that in the earlier stages of the *samādhi* the forces of actions (*karmas*) and mental dispositions (*saṁskāras*) usually persist, even though in a feeble condition; but gradually these get burnt up, when, there being no power left to keep the elements of the body together, the body falls off as a matter of course. As a general rule, the maximum period for which, according to tradition, the body may be maintained, is held to be twenty-one days. But in Rāmakṛṣṇa's case, it was found that, with occasional lapses after the intensity of the first three days, his *samādhi* continued for about six months without his body being affected in the least. During this time he was utterly forgetful of the body, which became the object of tender care on the part of some of his closest associates, who were apprehensive that Rāmakṛṣṇa's negligence of the body might do it incurable harm.

Totāpurī knew what *nirvikalpa samādhi* really meant. He was, therefore, struck with wonder when he noticed

that Rāmakṛṣṇa had achieved in three days what in his own case had required strenuous labour for forty years. The unbroken continuity of the *nirvikalpa* state for such long time was a clear evidence of the fact that Rāmakṛṣṇa's life was not to be judged by the standard of the other human beings. The reader may be referred to what Rāmakṛṣṇa himself said in a similar context concerning the difference between an ordinary soul and an extraordinary soul.[16]

Rāmakṛṣṇa in a State of 'Relative Consciousness' ('Bhāva-mukha') :

Having already realised the Divine Power (*saguṇa Brahman*) in the form of Mother, Rāmakṛṣṇa in his *nirvikalpa* state realised *nirguṇa Brahman* as well. Had he not been an epoch-maker, a man among men, it would have been impossible for him to return after *nirvikalpa* consciousness. One absorbed in the *nirvikalpa samādhi* or Pure Consciousness is lost to the world forever. But being a unique soul, destined to do spiritual good to the world, Rāmakṛṣṇa was bound to survive the bleak negation of *nirvikalpa jñāna*. As a matter of fact, we hear it said that in the course of Rāmakṛṣṇa's long spell of *nirvikalpa*, the Divine Mother Herself intervened not once or twice, but three times, and asked him to stay on in an intermediary position between the Cosmic Consciousness and the Transcendent Consciousness. Her words as reported by Rāmakṛṣṇa were '*bhāva mukhe thāko*', which means that

16. See passim pp. 43-44.

although he should keep himself above the limitations of the impure mind and the lower ego, he should not give up the ego altogether, but continue in the middle state of pure mind and pure ego, without which it was not possible to render any service to suffering humanity. The term *bhāva-mukha* would seem to mean, evidently, a state of consciousness which is not above the *bhāvas*, but is one from which all the possible *bhāvas* emanate.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Other Sādhanā's of Islām, Christianity, etc. :

Rāmakṛṣṇa's quest for Supreme Reality practically came to a close with the *advaita* realisation. It has been already noted that he did not lose himself in the *advaita* conciousness, but survived it. It may be of some interest to note that even after the *Vedānta sādhanā*, he practised, though only for a short time, the *Ṣūfīstic* culture of Islām and the Christian faith. As regards Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, there is no evidence to show that he followed these disciplines in his life. But it is well known that he had an implicit faith in the fundamental teachings of these religions, too.

3

Rāmakṛṣṇa on the Divine Essence and Power :

Rāmakṛṣṇa did not allow himself to be swayed by the theories of Divinity current in different schools

of thought. The monists of the Śaṅkara school believe in an Absolute which is not only formless (*nirākāra*), but also above all qualifications (*nirguṇa*). The Unitarians of the Brāhmo Samāja believed in the Supreme Principle as formless (*nirākāra*), but endowed with all auspicious and benevolent qualities (*nirākāra* and *saguṇa*). The devotees of the Vaiṣṇava school, however, had their faith in a Personal God, invested not only with infinite auspicious qualities but with a self-luminous form (*saguṇa* and *sākāra*). Rāmakṛṣṇa believed in and respected all these theories at one and the same time, for he was convinced, as a result of personal experience, that the Divine is infinite and unlimited: it is absurd to set limits to its Being and Plenitude. He declared, with his habitual simplicity (and at the same time, acuity) that to a devotional mind yearning for a personal fellowship (*bhakti*), God reveals Himself in one of His infinite number of resplendent forms (*sākāra*); but to that human consciousness, *i.e.*, of a *jñānin*, in which the objective reality appears as unreal as a dream, He is manifested as formless (*nirākāra*). Likewise the Supreme Reality is presented as a Personal God to the devotee who is conscious of the basic difference between himself and the external world. On the other hand, the gnostic consciousness of the Vedāntin, which is engaged in an intellectual excogitation on the ultimate nature of the world, finds unreality not only in the outer world but even in the thinking ego. Its realisation of *Brahman* is thus, as a matter of course, rigidly impersonal, and by its very nature, both ineffable and inscrutable.

Rāmakṛṣṇa brought in his homely and at the same time perspicacious similitudes in order to explain and justify this diversity of approach. He said that the element of deep devotion in an aspiring soul helped to effect the condensation or consolidation, as it were, of the Universal Being into a concrete form, consistent with the conscious or the subconscious desires in the devotee. It was as if the water of the sea were congealed into ice due to a great drop in its temperature. But the illumination of knowledge acted like the rising sun in thawing the ice and causing it to melt away into the formless and the abstract.

Rāmakṛṣṇa never betrayed any exclusive leaning toward a particular point of view or approach. Even with the conviction of a unitarian devotee to whom God was a Personal Being, but had no form, the great teacher would always sympathise. What he, however, insisted upon, was that in the interest of *bhakti* and its development, it was necessary that one's meditation on God should not be on a mere blank but on a Being, which though formless was yet endowed with an infinite number of benevolent qualities.

God, even though formless, is not necessarily outside the devotee's ken. Rāmakṛṣṇa was emphatic in his statement that it was possible to have a vision not only of God who has form, but even of the formless Divine :

He said :

'sākāra rūpa dekhā jāya, ābār arūpa o dekhā jāya'

He was also very emphatic that, in spite of all these controversies and diverse approaches regarding the Godhead which were all true, there was no doubt about the supreme attributes of unity, simplicity, and clarity of the Divinity. He said with convincing emphasis that with the human ego undeniably existing, the world could not but be taken as a reality, and similarly the multiple form and personality of the Divine were equally real.[17]

Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavān :

In the light of the forgoing analysis we can attempt a brief exposé of the teachings of the great mystic of Dakṣiṇeśvara. From Rāmakṛṣṇa's expressed conviction we can deduce that the Impersonal *Brahman* and the Personal *Bhagavān* are one and the same. The same Reality is realised as *Brahman* through *jñāna* and as *Bhagavān* through *bhakti*. *Paramātman*, too, is another name applied to the same Principle from the standpoint of *yoga*, which, as is clear, implies a communion between the individual and the universal.[18]

The Divine Power (*Śakti*) :

To one gifted with Supreme Knowledge, the soul, the world and all cosmic activities represent a won-

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17. R.L., I. pp. 68-72.
18. *brahmheti paramātmeti bhagavāniti śabdyate*

drous manifestation of the Power (*śakti*) associated with the Supreme Reality. But on a lower level of excellence, when all this is seen exclusively through the eyes of reason, the phenomena do appear reduced to a state of empty show. Even Power itself appears as seen in this light, to be no more than the baseless fabric of a vision. But reason, however fine, pure, and perfect it may be, cannot lead and elevate one to the plane of *samādhi,* if the *kuṇḍalinī*, the latent source of Power in man, is not awakened. Meditation and contemplation are conducive to the awakening of this Power. The crux of the matter is that *Brahman* and its *Śakti*, like fire and its heat, are not merely inseparable, but identical. We cannot conceive the one without the other. Hence Rāmakṛṣṇa's insistence is on the unity of the two phases. He explains that the same substance which is called *Brahman* in its static aspect, is called *Śakti* or Power when it is dynamic.[19]

The Divine Power is manifested in infinitely divergent ways. Why are the different names of Power (*śakti*), *e.g.*, *mahākālī*, *nityakālī*, etc., coined, but for the various roles of Power during cosmic creation. But in the deep darkness of the prenatal days of the world, when no other luminous being had come into existence, the Supreme Formless Power called *mahākālī* alone existed, immersed in the great Time-spirit (*mahākāla*). During the great cataclysmic flood (*mahāpralaya*) when the universe is dissolved,

19. R.K., I. pp. 46-49; III. pp. 80, 97.

the Great Mother as the incarnation of the highest Power withdraws, garners within Her the germs of creation, and preserves them as the permanent and potential seeds for the world to come. In this role, Power, as Mother, functions like a spider devotedly weaving its cobwebs from its own saliva.[20]

It is a fact that the seeker after knowledge yearns for *Brahman*-realisation, and the devotee, on the other hand, yearns for God (*Bhagavān*), who is omniscient and omnipotent; but in reality, *Brahman* and *Śakti* are identical. If at all there is a difference between the two, it is the same as between a gem and its lustre. *Bhagavān* is the name given to the Power of *Brahman* which functions in the world in the threefold cosmic role — creating, preserving and destroying.[21]

Brahmajñāna accrues from *samādhi*, in which the mind is dissolved or fixed, through constant excogitation (*vicāra*), in *jñāna-yoga*. This *vicāra* is *ipso facto* carried on through the process of elimination and negation (*neti neti*). The *Brahmajñānin* feels that the *Brahman* alone is real, and the world is unreal. But the *bhaktas* would veer apart. A *bhakta* considers every state as real. The world, to him, cannot be unreal. He looks rapt at the entire phenomena as the representation of the Power and Glory of the Lord. To the best *bhakta,* the pursuit of an identification goes with *Brahman* against the grain. The *yogin*, we find, sets his heart upon a vision of *Paramātman*; his

20. R.K., I. pp. 48-50; I. p. 116.
21. R.K., I. p. 116.

path does not tally with that of the *bhakta*. His object is to unify *jīvātman* with *Paramātman*. Hence he meditates upon *Paramātman*, selecting for himself a sanctum in a forlorn nook. He puts himself on a stable seat (*āsana*) and pursues his objective with a resolute mind. But the fact is, as Rāmakṛṣṇa points out, *Brahman*, *Paramātman*, and *Bhagavān* are identical and the same.[22]

It is impossible to have a direct knowledge of the *nirguṇa Brahman*, so long as the ego and the sense of difference emanating from it persist. The aspect of *Brahman* amenable to this state of the soul is undoubtedly *saguṇa*. The *saguṇa Brahman* is called by the name of the Divine Power — *Ādyā Śakti* or *Kālī*. It is another name of Personal God. The vision of *saguṇa Brahman* flashes upon the mirror of the ego of the devotee, after he has attained complete mental purity. This reflection is true so long as the pure ego continues. The reflected image is verily the Supreme Power (*Parā Śakti*). It responds to the yearnings and prayers of the soul, and helps it to acquire a knowledge of higher *Brahman*. This may appear to be fatuous, but it is not so. In reality and seen in their essentials, there is absolutely no difference between Power (*Śakti*) and *Brahman* or between *saguṇa Brahman* and *nirguṇa Brahman*. But the realisation of this oneness is not easy for everybody. A good deal of self-culture and self-elevation is necessary to make one eligible for this realisation. The conviction about this

22. R.K., I. p. 47.

undifferentiated unity is established in the mind only after the attainment of perfect knowledge. It is thus clear that the Mother, the symbol of *Parā Śakti*, does never deny the higher knowledge to the devotee (*bhakta*); but on the latter's part, if he is pure at heart, completely free from the ego, he hungers for something other than the higher knowledge; his heart wells out for a full absorption in the divine play going on everywhere and at all times.[23]

4

Rāmakṛṣṇa on Truth, Its Dual Aspect; Static and Dynamic :

Truth has a dual aspect. It is both static (*nitya*) and dynamic (*līlā*). The two, however, are identical in the sense that the static aspect is not intelligible unless viewed in the light of the dynamic one. It is from the dynamic aspect of Truth, through a gradual elimination of the intervening layers, that one has to reach its static aspect. It is impossible to transcend the dynamic and realise one's unity with the static, unless the egoistic sense were thoroughly eliminated. One may attain the static silence through contemplation on the basis of the negative formula and the process of elimination. But strange as it may seem, this negation does not imply rejection, which is impossible. What appears to be negated is also

23. R.K., I. pp. 192-193.

an integral aspect of the Supreme Truth, though the Supreme Truth cannot be realised until one attains *nirvikalpa* consciousness and can be descanted upon only after one has descended to the normal level of consciousness. Rāmakṛṣṇa was very emphatic on the view that the realisation of any of the two aspects of the Divine, the static and the dynamic, presupposes a state of perfect detachment and renunciation.[24]

Universal consciousness is one and indivisible. Rāmakṛṣṇa once had a mystic experience of this Unitive Consciousness.

He said :

"One day I had the vision of the essential unity of all things. At first it had been revealed to me that there were innumerable men, animals and other creatures. Among them there were the aristocrats, the Englishmen, the Musalmans, myself, scavengers and dogs. There was also a bearded Musalman with an earthenware tray of cooked rice in his hand. He put a few grains of rice into everybody's mouth. I too tasted a little."

"Another day I saw cooked rice, cooked vegetables, and other food-stuff, along with filth and garbage, lying on the ground. But lo and behold ! suddenly the soul came out of my body and like a flame, touched everything. It was like a protruding tongue of fire and tasted

24. R.K., III. p. 245.

> everything at once, leaving not even the excreta. It was thus revealed to me that all these are but one substance, the indubitable proof of the non-dual and indivisible consciousness.[25]

Rāmakṛṣṇa made it quite clear in his teachings that the world is not unreal. The soul is lost in *nirvikalpa samādhi*, and when, by the Divine Grace, it comes back to consciousness, it realises that the entire world is nothing but the Absolute Reality appearing in different forms. That the Divine has taken upon itself all these infinite forms and has become the world is intelligible only to the man, who has already had a *nirvikalpa samādhi*. It is for this reason that the phenomenal world cannot be rejected. So the great saint's conclusion was that the truth has two aspects, viz., the static (*nitya*) and the dynamic (*līlā*). The former aspect can be realised only in the state of *nirvikalpa samādhi*; but the latter is perceivable only after this *samādhi*.[26]

The human soul originates and emanates from the Universal Spirit which is distinguished by its infinite aspects. The congenital character of the soul is determined on the basis of the seminal aspect from which it has originated. Thus, if a man is born from the *Śiva* aspect of the Universal, he becomes a gnostic, endowed with the consciousness of *Brahman* as real and the world as unreal. Similarly, birth from

25. R.K., III. p. 52; *The Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna*, (Tr. by Sv. Nikhilānanda). p. 206.

26. R.K., III. p. 245.

the *Viṣṇu* aspect is sure to suffuse the soul with Divine Love, as an inalienable trait; this love, seminal as it is, does not disappear, though it seems so, after discriminative knowledge has been attained.[27]

5

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Concept of Human Soul and Its Classification :

Rāmakṛṣṇa's views on the human soul, as expressed from time to time in his talks with his admirers, may be summed up as follows :

The human souls may be classified differently from different points of view. There are certain souls that are eternally pure and by their very nature, liberated. These souls during their earthly tenure have nothing to covet in the world and live an eternal life out of commiseration for the rest of the humanity. Rāmakṛṣṇa's example for this is Nārada, the exemplary devotee (*bhakta*) of God who is eternally in communion with Him, as celebrated in the great epics of the land. A soul like Nārada is perfect from the very beginning and is always in touch with the Divine; it is thus a soul eternally perfect (*nitya-siddha*). Being always in a state of union with the Divine, such a soul has no need to perform any *sādhanā* for self-realisation. As a rule, these souls with their appointed seats high above, never usually descend to the mundane life. But

27. R.K., I. p. 216.

occasionally, a soul like this does come down, and in such a case a slight amount of *sādhanā* is enough to revive its original memory and heritage and re-establish it in the original state of communion with God. In exceptional cases such self-exertion becomes unnecessary for God-realisation, or it may also be that realisation comes first and self-exertion or *sādhanā* follows it.[28]

There are other souls which are pulled down to the earth and entangled in its snares. These souls get sunk in the enjoyments of the world and cannot think of anything else. Completely immersed in the pleasures of material life, these souls fail to realise that the worldly existence is at bottom a welter of misery and is unreal. The heady pursuits of the immediate present, and the satisfaction of the material well-being render these souls myopic about what all life leads to. Contemplation of God, along with the thoughts of after-life and release or escape from worldly misery never bother these souls at all. Even at the last gasp of life, worldly thoughts do not leave them. These souls are, therefore, denied liberation, and are constrained to return to worldly life again and again. In other words, immature and unripe as these souls are, they are subjected to a continuous process of moulding and refining. Until perfection is reached in this, no soul is allowed any liberation from the inexorable cycle of birth and death. Rāmakṛṣṇa's illustration of this bespeaks his inimitable mastery of commonplace but wonderfully apt analogies. He cites the example of a potter. Just as a potter kneads and

28. R.K., I. pp. 32-33; III. p. 933.

dissolves into fresh clay the unbaked potsherds — the remnants of the warped and broken pots — and uses the mixture for the making of fresh pots; in the same way, immature and imperfect souls are merged in the universal stuff of matter, so that out of this the souls may re-emerge in improved forms.[29]

Among the bound souls there are some that have still a yearning for emancipation and escape from the folds of Ignorance. Besides these, there are others who have already been liberated from the shackles of worldly existence and are free from the attractions of the world, having been able to fill themselves with devotion to God. Some of these souls secure their perfection through personal effort (*sādhana-siddha*) and some as a result either of divine grace or some unknown cause (*kṛpā-siddha*). It is very difficult to distinguish between the third and the fourth types, (*haṭhata-siddha* and *svapna-siddha*) both of which imply an element of spontaneity and unexpectedness. The last two really form a subclass under the second where the cause of grace is unknown.[30] Persons whose realisation is effected through visions in a dream are called *svapna-siddhas*.

The ordinary human souls are not considered capable of rising up to the level of Divine Love (*mahābhāva*) along the path of devotion. The utmost they can aspire after is the attainment of *bhāva* conducive to the Divine Love. This shows that a man as such cannot realise God until his nature has been

29. R.K., I. pp. 32-33; III. p. 93.
30. R.K., I. pp. 32-33; III. p. 93.

completely transformed. In normal conditions his devotion may ripen into *bhāva*, but the higher stages and dizzy heights of *mahābhāva*, on which God-realisation depends, are not accessible to ordinary souls.[31]

There is another distinction between a soul of the ordinary type (*jīvakoṭi*) and one of extraordinary type (*īśvarakoṭi*). The *modus operandi* of each belongs to a class by itself. The ordinary soul is allowed to practise the rules of devotional discipline as enjoined in the scriptures (*vaidhī-bhakti*), and follow the instructions contained therein concerning the details of devotional meditation (*japa*), worship (*pūjā*), initiatory rites (*puraścaraṇa*), etc. These devotional practices enable one to attain knowledge (*jñāna*) and ultimately to reach a state of dissolution. There is no return after dissolution. The extraordinary soul, on the other hand, attains *Brahman* or the Supracausal or Silent Being (*mahākāraṇa*), through a process of negation, after which it realises its fundamental unity with the *Brahman*. Once this realisation is made, the extraordinary soul is able to stay on in *Brahman*, or condescend temporarily to stay in the world and then leave it at will, simply because it has overcome all bondage, and has but a very thin and unobstreperous ego. Hence what is normally called a Divine Incarnation (*avatāra*), or an aspect of it, is only the symbolized form of an extraordinary soul. The ordinary soul, on the other hand, plods a harder way. It cannot realise God except through a regular process of *sādhanā*. It does not

31. R.K., IV. p. 29.

return after *nirvikalpa samādhi.* No such restriction on the free movement hampers an extraordinary soul, which can freely and easily descend, re-ascend and re-descend whenever it likes. Another difference between the two types is observed in the fact that while the love which an extraordinary soul feels for the Divine is spontaneous and has no impelling cause behind it (*ahetuka*), that which an ordinary soul feels is qualified and limited by its causal antecedents. Similarly, an ordinary soul is by nature sceptic, while in an extraordinary soul, faith is spontaneous and inborn.[32]

The pure Self (*nirguṇa Brahman*), however, is inactive, (*niṣkriya*), being the witness of the different states of worldly existence. It is to be distinguished from the human soul on the one hand and from God (*saguṇa Brahman*), the active (*sakriya*), the Dynamic Principle of the universe, on the other. This pure Self is unqualified *Brahman* and is called Supracausal Being (*mahākāraṇa*). It is the essence of all and is only the appropriate object of Self-realisation.[33]

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Concept of Ego:

The worst enemy of a man, in his spiritual journey, is his ego, which stands in the way of God-realisation. The snares of the egoistic consciousness are broken under the guidance and grace of the teacher (*guru*)

32. R.K., II. pp. 227-228; III. pp. 122, 163, 178, 193; IV. p. 133.
33. R.K., I. p. 218; IV. p. 214.

who lights the path to the attainment of knowledge through *samādhi*. A man hankering after a life of illumination should, therefore, strive to attain the highest state of *samādhi*, which is free from the effect of every trace of ego.[34]

The ego stands midway between the soul (*jīvātman*) and the Self (*Paramātman*) and separates the one from the other. If the ego were not putting the two apart, *jīvātman* and *Paramātman* would have been one and the same. Rāmakṛṣṇa's illustration of the above is characteristic of him. It is like a jar filled with water and submerged in the ocean. Beyond it and on all sides of it is water; and yet the water which is divided into two parts, one inside the jar and the other outside it, cannot be mixed until the jar itself is broken. The jar, it is evident, is the ego; the water inside it, the *jīvātman*; and the ocean, the *Paramātman*.[35]

The ego is not necessarily an evil, for there appears to be an ego which is nothing but a mere semblance of that which commonly goes by that term. This may be called the ego which is pure, free from worldly taints. It is retained in the consciousness of the soul which holds itself as a servant or a devotee of the Lord (*'dāsa āmi'*, *'bhakta āmi'*). This ego is like that of a child, stainless and free from worldly ties. It is this ego which persists even after *samādhi* in the case of an extraordinary soul. It is a friend and not an enemy of the self-realised soul. About its absolute

34. R.K., I. p. 89.
35. R.K., III. p. 247.

harmlessness there cannot be any doubt. Rāmakṛṣṇa's analogy for it was with a line drawn in water, which appears to separate the water into two parts only for moments and is then obliterated. The other ego, which represents a deeper impression and stain, is undoubtedly an evil, being the source of all downward pull towards the world. It is imperative that this ego should be gotten rid of.

Relating to the above categorisation, we see that the distinction lies between the ego that is pure, and the ego that is impure. The pure ego, a hand-maiden of *jñāna* and *bhakti*, is retained by the liberated soul in order to enjoy the Divine Sport or to redeem suffering humanity, even after the Divine Glory has been unfolded before his spiritual vision. It is absolutely harmless. With such an ego standing as a sentinel, all passions and other evil propensities are rendered completely innocuous and are no longer the pestering roots of all perversion.[36]

It is believed that all the aspirants (*sādhakas*) are not capable of returning to ordinary consciousness from the highest state of *samādhi*. It is only the God-like souls or the incarnations (*avatāras*) who can do so.[37] In such cases the pure ego of knowledge and devotion (*'vidyār āmi'*, *'bhaktir āmi'*) is retained, as long as it is desirable for the amelioration and general well-being of the world, to which it is required to preach the message of Divine Love and Wisdom. These souls

36. R.K., I. pp. 46, 89-92.
37. R.K., I. p. 125-126.

move between the sixth and seventh spiritual planes (*bhūmis*), corresponding in the human body to the *ājñā-cakra* in the forehead, and *sahasradala* above it, within the crown of the head. The ego, in the case of such souls, is only loosely planted. Nārada, Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana and Sanatkumāra, and other great saints have, all of them, this pure ego, as the scriptures say.[38]

Hanumāna, the greatest devotee of Rāma and the model of a pure soul, had a perfect realisation of the Divine, both in its personal and impersonal aspects. Yet his life as a servant and devotee of the Lord did not cease. At the moment of his supreme realisation, he had the soul-animating experience of his identity with Rāma, but at other moments he was never oblivious of the distance between him and the Lord, the same as exists between an humble servant and a great master. Similar was the case of the hallowed Prahlāda, who retained, for the sake of *bhakti*, his pure ego even after the attainment of *samādhi*.[39]

6

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Concept of Guru and Its Classification :

Rāmakṛṣṇa holds that God, in His infinite beatitude, takes upon Himself the mantle of the *guru* or perfect master, cuts asunder the fetters of *māyā* and releases the weakling *jīva*. The fact is that an ordinary soul,

38. R.K., IV. p. 133.
39. R.K., II. p. 249; III. pp. 89, 245; IV. pp. 7, 133-134.

prone to the pleasures of the world, cannot get rid of *māyā* and come out in the taintless regions of Self-realisation, without any substantial external aid, though the extraordinary souls have the power of getting in and out of *māyā* at their own will. The external help thus required is furnished by the *guru*.[40]

The true teacher (*sadguru*) alone is entitled to give instructions to others, because his knowledge of God is immediate and is not based either on reasoning or on hearsay. A man with intellectual learning but devoid of detachment and discrimination is not entitled to speak on matters relating to spiritual life.[41]

The function of a *guru* should not be degraded in the interests of wordly gain. For the *guru*, too, there are certain imperatives. To sell one's own soul for money, fame or physical comfort is extremely objectionable, nay derogatory, because there is no doubt that the powers of the soul must be better utilised in the attainment of the Divine. Wasting of higher spiritual powers out of worldly considerations is really tantamount to a prostitution of these powers.[42]

There is no harm in disobeying the words of one's elders and superiors for the sake of God. The milkmaids (*Gopīs*) of Vṛndāvana, who are celebrated in the *Vaiṣṇava* literature, did not hearken to their husbands, for the sake of *Kṛṣṇa*. Prahlāda defied his father so that he could be true to God. Bāli, in order to

40. R.K., III. pp. 192-193.
41. R.K., III. pp. 196-197.
42. R.K., III. pp. 156-157.

please the Lord, was indifferent to the words of his *guru*, Śukra. Vibhīṣaṇa transgressed the words of his elder brother, Rāvaṇa, in order to secure the friendship of Rāmacandra.[43]

A professional *guru* is a contradiction in terms. One cannot function as a true teacher unless ordained by the Divine.[44] This commandment comes not in the form of an intuition of the higher mind; but it is embodied in an actual order communicated in human language, through a concrete form by which He reveals Himself. Such an order or commandment is charged with power. If a man in his conceit presumes that he is a *guru*, he deserves only to be pitied. One who wishes to rise high cannot but be humble. One ought to try to be a true disciple rather than seek to be a master. Humility rather than conceit paves the path of knowledge.[45]

The true *guru* is the incarnation of God himself who is Self-conscious Infinite Bliss. It is the cherished moment of the manifestation of the longed-for Divinity (*iṣṭa devatā*) before the devotee, which synchronises with the advent of the *guru*, who reveals unto the devotee what is genuinely desirable (*iṣṭa*) for him. As a matter of fact, there is no duality or dichotomy between the *guru* and the *iṣṭa devatā* : in the final analysis both are the same. The *guru* has only a brief stay before the devotee; he serves his end by putting

43. R.K., III. p. 141.
44. R.K., I. pp. 57-58.
45. R.K., I. pp. 86-87, 106; III. p. 299.

the devotee on the right path, and then he merges into the chosen deity.[46]

There can be no better guide than the *guru*. It is through the grace of *guru* that a man is spared the bleak prospect of being totally submerged and lost in the immeasurable Infinite, consequent upon his attempt to measure the Infinite by himself—he being only a poor, finite outcome of it. It is again through the grace of *guru* that one is able to retain one's sense of separateness as evident in worldly consciousness. Finally, it is also through the grace of the *guru* that one may venture a plunge into the ocean of the Infinite without any possibility of being drowned, and without losing one's identity. Through the *guru*'s grace, the devotee can keep himself afloat in the ocean of infinite bliss, freely, joyously and with full self-confidence.[47]

The identity between the *guru* and *iṣṭa* has already been pointed out. The rationale behind this identification can be found without much difficulty if we refer to the *Tāntrika* metaphysics. To the *Tāntrika*, when perfection of knowledge has been attained through what is called *śavasādhanā*, *i.e.*, a deep and devoted spiritual discipline pursued from the corpse-seat (*śavāsana*), and the inner eye of the devotee has been opened, there is the rewarding advent of the *guru* before the devotee. The *guru* lights the path to the devotee's *iṣṭa*, after which the former merges into the latter.[48]

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46. R.K., IV. p. 14.
47. R.K., IV. p. 67.
48. R.K., IV. pp. 294-297.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's emphasis on the need for a *guru* is unmistakable. His teachings are replete with references to the ideal *guru*. He says that, to most persons on the path of devotion, the help of the *guru* is essential. It is imperative, he affirms, to have faith in the words of the *guru* and to look upon him as God.[49] Even the human *guru* must be seen as a manifestation of the Divine. This faith alone can engender a reciprocal faith in the *mantra*. When there is faith, nothing else is needed. The legend of Ekalavya, to which Rāmakṛṣṇa refers as an example in point, furnishes a thrilling account of a devotee's absolute faith in his *guru*. Ekalavya, failing to get instructions from Droṇa whom he had enthroned in his heart as his *guru*, paid respect to the clay image of Droṇa imbuing it with the warmth of his devotion for Droṇa himself. The reward came to him in his gaining a superb mastery in the art of archery. It goes without saying that it was Ekalavya's faith which helped him reach his goal.[50] At the same time, it should be clear that the devotee's respect for the *guru* should not be allowed to be swayed by the frailties in the *guru*'s conduct discovered later.[51]

In Rāmakṛṣṇa's teachings the *guru* or *ācārya* is classified under three categories, viz., (*i*) the lowest, (*ii*) the mediocre, and (*iii*) the highest. They are described as follows :

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49. R.K., V. p. 54.
50. R.K., V. p. 77.
51. R.K., II. p. 124.

(*i*) *The lowest type* : The teacher who gives instructions on *dharma* to his disciples, but does not keep a watchful eye on their actual progress, is of the lowest type.

(*ii*) *The mediocre type* : But one, who is of a higher type than the previous one, is not satisfied with giving instructions only once, but tries repeatedly to exhort and persuade the disciples in various ways to pursue the true path, and to carry out and practise the instructions given to them.

(*iii*) *The highest type* : But the highest type, *i.e.*, the best *guru*, is one who not only convinces his disciples of the truth of his instructions, but also forces them to act accordingly. He does not feel contented unless he has seen the successful results of his teachings in the disciples' lives.[52]

The *guru* enjoys unlimited and absolute power in the spiritual world. His is always the final say. The efficacy of individual effort, devotion and discriminating knowledge are indeed great but are not sufficient. However intense the individual effort may be, it is of little avail in the spiritual path unless it is supplemented and sustained by the grace of the *guru*. And as a matter of fact, when this grace is forthcoming, everything else that is needed comes of itself. The true essence of the soul is revealed to a man only in the refulgence produced by this grace. There are so many adamantine fetters that bind down the soul to the material world. Even the

52. R.K., I. p. 68.

most strenuous efforts of an adept, made through a whole lifetime, cannot break them. But the *guru*'s grace performs the miracle : just a moment of it, and, suddenly the fetters are gone. The soul shines in its original glory.[53]

But there are teachers and teachers; and how can we distinguish the genuine *guru* from the pseudo-*guru* ? In Rāmakṛṣṇa's teachings we find it repeatedly told that it is not possible for just a common man to deliver another man. Deliverance, for which the soul of man is constantly yearning, is from the clutches of *māyā*. This can be effected only by the aid and guidance of the Divine Master and not by any other. How can a human being, unless he himself has realised God and received His commandment (*cāpa-rāsa*) and the authority of His illimitable power, can expect to liberate the human soul from the bonds of worldly existence ? The *sadguru*, who is one of those privileged few (as stated above), can effect this only if he wills to do so. He can remove the ego-sense (*ahaṁkāra*) of the disciple, and completely dispel the darkness of *māyā* almost instantaneously.[54]

Guru and Grace :

A *guru* or *ācārya* gains his right title only after he has received God's commandment. Thus it follows

53. R.K., II. pp. 59, 80.
54. R.K., I. p. 87.

that all talks about the professional *guru* or the genealogical descent of a *guru* are nothing but mere myths.[55] The absolute necessity of Divine Grace for the deliverance of the human soul finds repeated iteration in Rāmakṛṣṇa's teachings. He says that human efforts, even though very sincere, earnest, and strong, cannot replace the grace. The immediate function of grace is to remove the veil from the face of Divine Truth and make Divinity accessible to man. In Rāmakṛṣṇa's words, God is hidden behind a coating of His self-made limitation. This coating cannot be removed by any human agency, which is limited in power. The removal of this is possible only through an act of Divine Grace. Grace, being an eternal act in Divine Providence, always comes unsolicited and does not depend on the merit of the recipient. It is, therefore, uncaused in its incidence. The human soul, however, does not feel its presence or efficacy so long as it is impure and overburdened with aggressive egoism. As soon as it begins to feel its own insignificance in relation to the Divine Majesty and becomes humble in spirit, all its impurities disappear and it begins to gravitate towards the Divine. This is, in fact, a positive reaction of Divine Grace on the human soul, a reaction which would not have been possible, had the soul not been rendered already pure.

Grace is mysterious, in its nature as well as in its incidence. So long as the desires and passions

55. R.K., III. p. 219.

continue to cling to the soul, human efforts can never bring one nearer to success in one's aim of self-realisation. What is most indispensable is, therefore, the elimination of the leechlike hold of the desires and passions. Success in this end may be accomplished in a flash if the Divine Grace intervenes. But grace is independent of all external factors. Nobody, therefore, can say what is the royal road to grace. Beyond this—that it is inscrutable, inexplicable and ineffable—we know precious little about grace. Rāmakṛṣṇa's illustration of this circumstance is again refreshingly homely. He says that God's nature is like that of a child : it expresses itself in the form of freakish and spontaneous outbursts, which no *a priori* reasoning can fathom.[56]

In spite of the above statement, why is it then said that it is necessary to propitiate Divine Power (*Mahāmāyā*) for the favour of Divine Grace ? The answer to the question lies in the realisation that

56. R.K., III. p. 181.

In his teachings, Rāmakṛṣṇa elaborates the analogy further, by giving the example of a child who is sitting by the road with a good assortment of gems in his clothes. The passers-by passed him. Many of them pray to him for the gems. But he hides the gems with his hands, and turning away his face, says, "No, I will not give." But another man comes along. He does not ask for the gems, and yet the child runs after him and offers him the gems, begging him to accept them. This illustration has a striking parallel to the nature of God about whose grace nothing can be definitely said. In the ancient Indian scriptures occurs the following picture of God's nature *vis-à-vis* grace : *krīḍato bālakasyaiva kṛḍām tasya niśāmaya.* (*Viṣṇu-purāṇa*)

though the entire world is directly and closely under the influence of that power, it has become involved in ignorance due to lack of faith in the *guru*. It has thus so inhibited and confused itself that it has lost the clue to an entrée into the spiritual world. Its loss in the *cul de sac* of ignorance has thus deprived the world of the knowledge of the secrets of God's nature and God's gifts to it. Divine Grace has thus become a far cry. But there can be a rehabilitation and a recovery, for which the teachings of a true master (*sadguru*) are essential, as has been already said. The *guru*'s advent in one's life, therefore, is the great harbinger of one's recovered spiritual vision and one's fitness to receive the Divine Grace. The propitiation of the Divine Power (*Mahāmāyā*) becomes necessary in this context; it is the step leading to the climacteric point of a seeker's life; it accelerates the process of the seeker's finding his true mentor.[57] Everything, as pointed out above, is accomplished by the grace of *guru*; still however, a certain amount of personal exertion, including the propitiation of the Divine Power, is needed. Even this exertion in its basis depends on the *guru*'s initiative.[58]

The capacity for reception is not equal from man to man. For this reason the method and content of the teachings of great men differ from disciple to disciple. A teacher, just a man like us, cannot teach others for the very simple reason that he will

57. R.K., II. p. 27.
58. R.K., V. p. 59.

be unable to appreciate and provide for the standpoint of the person to be taught. Hence teaching, for its success, depends on the ability of the teacher to enter into the heart and mind of the taught. God, who is omniscient, is thus the true teacher. To man, the insignia and right of teachership come from God Himself. It is He who endows a mortal with the teacher's intuitive perception of others' minds, and thus ordains him as a genuine teacher.[59]

Renunciation (*vairāgya*), another milestone on the path of Self-realisation, similarly cannot be achieved without Divine Grace. *Vairāgya* may be just partial, or very intense and complete. Intense *vairāgya* is possible only upon the strength of Divine Grace. When an intense urge for *vairāgya* possesses a man at the initial stages, there is a repulsion towards all worldly attractions, luxuries and similar temptations. But as the *vairāgya* grows intense, a keen longing for the union with God arises in the heart of the devotee, who recognises nothing but the Divine as his own. The material world, so tempting and attractive before, now appears as a dark pit into which he is apprehensive of a fall at any moment. Without intense *vairāgya*, therefore, no man can attain Divine Realisation.[60] Grace alone, as has been said above, makes the intense urge for *vairāgya* possible. Sensuality, lust and greed are the other tough obstacles in the path of the seeker. These are, however, over-

59. R.K., I. p. 24.
60. R.K., I. pp. 82-84.

come, only after the realisation of God coming in the wake of the intense *vairāgya*.[61]

Rāmakṛṣṇa, it is clear, emphasises the point that God is realised only when one has transcended the mental states. He says that God is beyond mind and cognition, though he admits that, when the mind is free from all desires and passions for worldly enjoyment and when the ego has been destroyed from the mind and rendered innocuous, the mind is in a position to receive the glimpse of the Divine.[62] The fact is that one cannot have any direct experience of the Pure Self unless one is able to rise up personally to the same level. The great seers, celebrated in the ancient scriptures, were enabled to have visions of God just in this way. Mere intellectual activities do not carry us very far in the path of realisation.[63]

7

Rāmakṛṣṇa on the Path of Duty vis-à-vis Renunciation; Karma-yoga Examined :

Karma-yoga is a discipline of supreme importance in the path of Self-realisation. It consists in performing, in disinterested spirit, the duties and imperatives enjoined in the *śāstras* as an aid to the spiritual quest. Some of the best discourses of Rāmakṛṣṇa deal with

61. R.K., I. p. 85.
62. R.K., I. p. 227.
63. R.K., I. p. 240.

Karma-yoga, to which he assigns a very important place. He says that *karma* is obligatory so long as the heart of the seeker is not replete with Divine Love. But how to know that the seeker's heart has been fully saturated by it? When the point of excellence in this regard has been reached, the very mention of the Lord's name gives a rare thrill to the seeker, making the hairs of his body stand on end and making tears flow from his eyes. It should be clearly understood that at the peak of such an experience, *Karma-yoga* brings about its own renunciation. At and after this point, the spiritual disciplines and imperatives, so long essential, recede to the background and no longer make any demand upon the seeker. But the moment comes of its own—it has not to be brought at will. The meaning is that a regular discharge of one's duties transforms one's body; and the mind, as a consequence, remains absorbed in the divine contemplation. It is a stage of the most elevated type of divine rapture (*bhāva*), when even a reference to 'God' sends a thrill through the whole frame and inner being of the seeker. In this state the mere utterance of the word 'God' or the esoteric term *oṁkāra* is enough to throw the devotee into this ineffable raptures.[64]

It is not possible to renounce *karma* altogether so long as one continues in body, *i.e.*, the untransformed, common body.[65] Regarding its practicability, Rāmakṛṣṇa observes that *Karma-yoga* is very difficult of

64. R.K., I. p. 18.
65. R.K., IV. p. 202.

attainment, especially in the present age. *Bhakti-yoga*, as a matter of fact, is more suitable to this age. *Karma-yoga*, to be successful, demands that we should be free from desires and that everything should be done strictly according to the spiritual injunctions and imperatives. It is incumbent upon us to perform *karma* in this world so long as the momentum of our past *karmas* (*prārabdhas*) is not exhausted. It thus becomes necessary to cultivate *bhakti* and love along with *karma*, which is exhausted when the waves of *bhakti* fill the heart, and when a mere but fervent utterance of the word 'God' is enough to outweigh all that pertain to *karmas*. The more one feels the pure love for God, the less is the effect of his past *karmas*. When God is attained, *karma* is renounced.[66]

Prārabdha karma binds every man. As a rule, there is no escape from it. But as a result of chanting God's Name, thinking on Him and taking refuge in Him, much of it can be destroyed. A small portion of it at least, has to be experienced by all, no matter what spiritual status one enjoys. Of course, in this matter, there is a difference between the ordinary and the extraordinary souls. Incidence and intensity of *prārabdha karma* are more in the case of the former, and less in the case of the latter. The extraordinary souls are always free from sins or *karmas*, whereas the ordinary souls are not.[67]

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66. R.K., IV. p. 218.
67. R.K., III. pp. 71, 293.

Karma is one of the categorical imperatives; it is a 'must' for all human beings, but its fruits should be 'made over' to God. Singing the glories of God's Name, rapt meditation upon the spiritual wisdom contained in the divine affirmation 'I am That' (*so'ham*), and even respiration itself are forms of *karma*. Duties accomplished with dedication but without any stirring of the heart for the prize (*niṣkāma karma*) are the best, simply because from such dedication arises a genuine love for God, which, when intensified and consummated, leads to God-realisation. Just as a man's love of God grows, it progressively weakens his *karma*. *Niṣkāma karma*, moreover, renders the mind pure, and inundates it with love, from which the supreme attainments can never be far off. The devotee's apocalyptic and beatific visions, his establishing communion with Him, and similar spiritual experiences stem from his love of God, which is a result of *niṣkāma karma*.[68]

8

Rāmakṛṣṇa on Yoga, Its Categories and Elements, Its Special Position; the Path of Yoga:

Yoga, in Rāmakṛṣṇa's view, is the common name given to any method by which one may be enabled to reach and remain in contact with the Divine Reality. There are mainly two methods. The

68. R.K., III. p. 18.

one is called *karma-yoga,* on which Rāmakṛṣṇa's views have already been stated. Those who are eligible for this kind of *yoga* are men already associated with a particular stage of life (*āśrama*). While following this method, they have to perform their daily duties, as laid upon them by the *āśramas* to which they belong, without any desire for reward. Holding of a staff (*daṇḍa*), begging alms (*bhikṣā*), going on pilgrimage (*tīrtha-yātrā*), worship (*pūjā*) and a single-minded reiteration of the holy *mantras* (*japa*) — these are the imperative duties, the performance of which help establish union with God. Not these actions alone, but any action performed with absolute detachment, out of a sense of duty, leads to the same result.

The other kind of *yoga* has nothing to do with such actions; it bears solely on the mind and its control, implying thus that through this process of absolute mental discipline, the *yogin*'s union with God is established. Followers of this *yoga,* such as Jaḍa Bharata, Śukadeva, and others celebrated in our ancient sacred lore, are found adopting a silent method of spiritual exercise and progress, with the aim of achieving union and not maintaining any external evidence of their future career. But an absolute pre-occupation with the mind and its elevation through silent discipline makes the *yogins* of this category neglect all appearance. It may appear funny, but Rāmakṛṣṇa insists in all seriousness that the reason why such *yogins* grow locks of matted hair and long beards lies in the fact that they in their absorbed state become completely oblivious of the necessity of keeping their appearance neat.

The second type of *yoga*, referred to just above, has for its ideal an absolute freedom from action, except for the functioning of memory and meditation — an ideal which is realised only in the case of a *parama-haṁsa*.[69] The mental faculties in this type of *yoga* are always held in abeyance, the soul being, at the moment, replete with the delectation of union with the Divine. It is to be noted that these *yogins* are above all action and its consequences, and whatever action they do, they do not have any personal interest; the action is done only to serve as an example to others.[70]

The chief element in any dedicated pursuit of *mano-yoga* is meditation upon God, about which a strict secrecy is enjoined upon the *yogin*. Meditation differs accordingly as its object, *i.e.*, God, is viewed either as an immanent but formless spirit, or as a concrete and positive form. In the former type of meditation, all concrete objects are gradually and finally merged in the Infinite after which only the consciousness of one's own Self remains. This meditation is symbolised by *Śiva*'s cosmic dance, in which all forms (*sākāra*) are merged in the formless (*nirākāra*). Hence, this form of meditation is called *Śiva-yoga*. While pursuing this path, the *yogin* has to fix his eyes upon his forehead and remain absorbed in the meditation of the Self, by proceeding along the path of negation (*neti neti*), *i.e.*, by rejecting everything other than the Self until

69. Literally, it means the great one who can say 'I am He' (that is, God).

70. R.K., IV. pp. 208-209.

the Self alone remains.[71] The other type of meditation, in which the eyes are fixed upon the tip of the nose, and the vision is partly outer and partly inner, is called *Viṣṇu-yoga*. It is also symbolised by *Śiva*'s dance, when He dances as the *devotee* of Rāma.[72]

In most human beings the mind is generally restless and unsteady. Its faculties and powers, however, have to be steadied and concentrated through strenuous efforts. This concentration when successfully effected makes the mind fit for the spiritual pursuit. The mind, in this stable state, resembles the steady flame of a candle undisturbed by the slightest wind. Steadiness and purity go together, and all purity of the mind implies an eradication of the desires and passions (*vāsanās*) from it. The vision of God or of the Supreme Truth can come to that mind alone which has been completely purified.[73]

Meditation Leading to Samādhi and the Awakening of Kuṇḍalinī :

A long practice of meditation which is a process of introversion progressively leads up to rapt contempla-

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71. This meditation is peculiar to the *jñānin*. In Rāmakṛṣṇa's teachings we find him referring to the exclusive consciousness of the Self, and describing it as an infinite space of Pure Consciousness (*cidākāśa*) in which numberless birds are flying about in joy and flapping their wings.

72. R.K., III. p. 256; IV. p. 241; V. p. 143.

73. R.K., III. p. 191.

tion and complete absorption (*samādhi*), a state of ecstatic perfection in which the mind may exist in a very tenuous condition or it may be submerged altogether. The two states or stages mentioned above are known respectively as *sthita samādhi* and *unmanā samādhi*. In the former, the *yogin* is lost to all outer consciousness and may persist in this state for a fairly long time. In the latter case, however, the scattered mind existing as a thin line is abruptly collected and focussed on God.[74]

Samādhi, or for that matter, meditation, is not possible except as a result of the welling up of the great 'intra-organic wind' or 'bio-motor force' (*mahāvāyu*) from the base of the spinal column, through it, to the upper cerebral regions. The way in which this force moves up differs from individual to individual. This difference is explained by the analogy of the typical movements of the ant, the fish, the monkey, the bird and the snake respectively.[75] When the upward movement of the force ceases in the cerebrum, all sense of difference or separateness is obliterated and there is *samādhi*.[76]

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74. R.K., V. p. 164.

75. The difference explained by the analogy of ants, etc., refers only to the nature of the movements of the force (*mahāvāyu*). Sometimes it moves externally like an ant; sometimes it glides like a fish in the water; sometimes it takes sudden jumps from one *cakra* to another like a monkey; sometimes it moves like birds from one branch to another; and sometimes it moves in a zigzag way like a snake.

76. R.K., IV. p. 277.

This leads us into the deeper recesses of the esoteric metaphysics latent in Rāmakṛṣṇa's teachings. What he describes as the movement of the 'great intra-organic wind' (*mahāvāyu*) is in actuality the activity of the dynamic *kuṇḍalinī* after its re-awakening from the agelong torpor in the lower regions of the nervous system. In the language of the traditional *Yoga-śāstra*, the *kuṇḍalinī* lies dormant in the *mūlādhāra* centre (*cakra*) at the base of the spine. When awakened it rouses and bestirs itself for the wonted upward flow. It passes along the cardinal nerve called *suṣumnā*, through a series of higher and higher centres, viz., *svādhiṣṭhāna, maṇipūra,* etc., to reach the cerebral region. This passage of the *kuṇḍalinī*, it is evident, is identical with the uprush of the 'great intra-organic wind' (*mahāvāyu*) referred to above.[77]

The *kuṇḍalinī* may be awakened in different ways. The best way, however, is earnest prayer to the Lord. The awakening of this Power in the human system is synchronous with the increase of knowledge, *bhāva*, *bhakti* and Divine love.[78] The centres (*cakras*) through which the *kuṇḍalinī* passes, look like so many resplendent lotuses in the subtle body, and are visible to the *yogin*. The centres (*cakras*) are six in number. They, however, constitute the domain of *māyā*, the symbols of the earthly attractions, through which and overcoming which the *kuṇḍalinī* has to ascend in order to bring about the union of the soul with the Divine. God-vision follows as a matter of course, after *māyā*,

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77. R.K., IV. p. 278.

78. R.K., II. p. 189; IV. p. 278.

which blocks the uphill path, has been removed. The fitness for admission into the higher spiritual regions is gained after the victory over *māyā*.[79]

The upward movement of the *kuṇḍalinī* is accompanied by an unceasing reverberation within. This reverberation, called the 'unstruck one' (*anāhata*), is that of the divine sound *praṇava* echoing within our frame, and emanates from the region round about the navel. This sound is too subtle and divine, (and by its very nature, unstruck) to be audible to the ears of worldly men. But the true and accredited *yogin* listens to it. Though this sound is described as internal, it really pervades the entire universe.[80] It is nothing but *Brahman* itself, manifested as *Śabda Brahman*, and corresponds to a form (*rūpa*).[81]

Rāmakṛṣṇa on Classification and Function of Samādhi :

Besides the classification of *samādhi* into the two categories, viz., *sthita* and *unmanā*, other classifications are also found in Rāmakṛṣṇa's teachings and discourses, *e.g.*, *savikalpa samādhi* and *nirvikalpa samādhi*, *bhāva samādhi* and *nirvikalpa samādhi*. It would not be exactly correct to say that although *savikalpa samādhi* is differentiated from *nirvikalpa* in the same way as *bhāva*

79. R.K., V. pp. 56, 124.

80. In this sense, it is analogous to the soul-animating strains of the music of the spheres, described in Neoplatonic literature.

81. R.K., II. pp. 17, 111.

samādhi, there is a relation of identity between *savikalpa samādhi* and *bhāva samādhi*. That they are allied is beyond any question. But they are not exactly the same. Rāmakṛṣṇa points this out with his customary clarity. He says that in *savikalpa samādhi* there is persistence of the ego to a slight extent: otherwise there would be no joy in the *yogin* caused by his realisation of the Divine. But this joy is an absorbing and exclusively inner process, and in its midst the *yogin* has no outer consciousness at all. On the other hand, in *nirvikalpa samādhi*, which is also called *jaḍa samādhi* and is beyond all descriptions, even the least trace of ego does not linger. In the *bhāva samādhi*, the Divine Form is manifested everywhere as seen by the inner eye of the *yogin*. This is a natural fruit of the pursuit of the path of devotion (*bhakti-mārga*). In the *nirvikalpa samādhi*, however, which follows from the path of knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*), the absolute, infinite and indivisible *Brahman*, free from ego, name and form, is revealed to the *yogin*.[82]

The most important function of true *samādhi* is to lead the aspirant beyond the kingdom of *Śakti*. Meditation upon God with form (*saguṇa upāsanā* and *dhyāna*), howsoever elevated, cannot help the *yogin* ascend beyond the confines of *Śakti*. These by themselves can never lead to *Brahman*, even though, as we know, *Brahman* and *Śakti* are identical — one being eternal (*nitya*), and the other its divine sport (*līlā*) as manifested before the eyes of the *yogin*.[83]

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82. R.K., I. pp. 100, 166; II. pp. 227-228.
83. R.K., I. pp. 48-49.

Under ordinary circumstances, it is not possible to retain one's body after the highest state of *samādhi*. But a person who is extraordinary in his inner strength, and in his store of love and compassion, is an exception to the above rule. On him falls the mantle to teach and guide the world, and hence he is allowed to retain his physical frame after he has been able to attain the highest state of *samādhi*.[84]

Rāmakṛṣṇa, we find, hastens to correct a possible misunderstanding of his audience. He emphatically tells them that perfection in *yoga* does not necessarily imply a renunciation of the world. For he speaks of the two categories of *yogins* : those who are open (*vyakta*), *i.e.*, openly known or well known to have attained the highest state of *samādhi* and, as a result, to have renounced the world; and those who are secret (*gupta*), *i.e.*, whose attainments the world knows but only little and who thus carry on their ordained mission of teaching and guiding others.[85]

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Rāmakṛṣṇa on Faith as an Essential Element of Sādhanā :

Faith is one of the essential elements of mystic life and is a *sine qua non* for a *yogin* in this path of spiritual progress. Lest there should be any misun-

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84. R.K., I. pp. 74-75.
85. R.K., III. p. 125.

derstanding, Rāmakṛṣṇa distinguishes faith from bigotry which is positively harmful. Similarly, faith in anything particular does not imply that it alone is real. Contrarily, an object in which one may not have faith need not be unreal. As a guiding principle, faith freed from all bigotry and obscurantism is a valuable asset for the spiritual path. What is needed is an unshakable adherence (*niṣṭhā*) and tenacity of pursuit in regard to the goal. True and pure faith is very rare and if once a man is able to secure it, he has nothing to be afraid of, because his sins are destroyed by the faith which fills his heart. The impossible becomes possible under its influence. Firm faith is a sure means to an expeditious Divine realisation, and without it the realisation is rendered extremely difficult.[86]

Rāmakṛṣṇa's practical and pragmatic wisdom is to be marked in his insistence that, in the present age (*kaliyuga*), the path of devotion (*bhakti-mārga*) is certainly the best. It is an unfailing means of Divine-realisation without any risk or danger. What goes by the name of *Nāradīya-bhakti*, or the course of devotion prescribed by Nārada in his *Bhakti-sūtras*, is the most suitable path of devotion for the people of the modern age, who in their strength of mind have fallen precipitously from what the standard was in the previous ages. Along the path of *bhakti*, the ego does linger, but it is the ego rendered completely innocuous. At any rate it does not produce ignorance or other baneful effects. On the other hand, the ego under the direct and overflowing impact of *bhakti* is a

86. R.K., I. pp. 23, 186-187; III. p. 15.

sure aid to God-realisation. For all practical purposes, this ego is only nominal.

The Essential Feature of Bhakti :

The essential feature of pure *bhakti* lies in the fact that it has no bearing on the nature of its object and is self-contained. It may be personal or even impersonal. What is really needed is a keen and impelling consciousness of the existence of God who is omnipotent, immanent and immediately responsive to the devotee's prayer. To enable the feeling of devotion to take roots and develop in the devotee's heart and soul, it is necessary that God be conceived as endowed with gracious qualities (*saguṇa*). The question whether He has or has not a form is nothing but of a purely intellectual interest. The God of a devotee (*bhakta*) must always be *saguṇa* and responsive. It is only the *jñānin* who advocates the meditation of *nirguṇa Brahman*.[87]

In the case of the ordinary souls (*jīvakoṭi*), *bhakti* arises out of certain antecedent conditions; whereas in case of extraordinary souls (*īśvarakoṭi*), it may well up even without such antecedent conditions.[88] As to what these conditions are, we find Rāmakṛṣṇa making apparently different statements on different occasions, probably on account of the fact that he was discours-

87. R.K., I. p. 70.
88. R.K., III. p. 122.

ing with different types of audiences, or due to the fact that he himself was in different psychic states. But even in this context we find certain common features which do go to make one statement equivalent to the other. For example, Rāmakṛṣṇa lays great stress on *karma*, without which neither *bhakti* nor God-vision is possible. He explains *karma* as meditation (*dhyāna*), repetition of Lord's Name (*japa*), and singing His glories (*nāma-gāna* or *Hari-guṇa-gāna*), etc.

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Emphasis on the Practice of the Divine Name :

Rāmakṛṣṇa affirms and emphasises the great importance of the Divine Name for a true devotee (*sādhaka*), especially in the present age when the spiritual life is at its lowest. It is equally important that for effecting speedy success, the purification caused through the absorbed singing of God's Name should be supplemented and intensified through an exclusive pursuit of Divine Love. Repetition of God's Name and indulgence in worldly pleasure cannot go together. There must be a keen longing for God in the heart. It is true, Rāmakṛṣṇa points out by way of illustration, that according to the ancient mythologies, Ajāmila was a great sinner, and yet he was admitted into the portals of the eternal Heavens merely because he had momentarily but fervently uttered God's Name at his dying moments. Was that Ajāmila's only merit ? Rāmakṛṣṇa hastens to add that it must be assumed that Ajāmila by his virtuous deeds, in his previous life, must have

accumulated a great store of merit, or that he had practised penances subsequently in order to make amends for his earlier sinful life. It may also be assumed, Rāmakṛṣṇa goes on to say, that it being the dying moment, the purity established through it, could not have been marred in any way by any subsequent activities. While not minimising the importance and potentiality of the fervent repetition of God's Name, Rāmakṛṣṇa, by looking at it objectively, finds that, if it were the only action of the devotee, it would certainly smack of the blind and mechanical pursuit of an easy formula. Rather, the devotee should supplement it by a sincere supplication to God for the dual purpose of generating in his heart the true and sincere love of God and for weaning him away from the existing attachment to the values of the material life.[89]

The power of the Divine Name is undeniable. It is capable of removing all kinds of sins including the passions, anger, desire for creature comforts, etc. Even if a man feels a sense of tedium in the dry process of repeating God's Name mechanically, he should, under no circumstances, cease his attempt, but should continue it with a sincere heart, praying to the Lord to grant him sufficient strength and spirit of joy while he repeats the Divine Name. This relish and joy of the Divine Name is an essential condition for spiritual progress. It is very probable that in ordinary circumstances, *nāma-gāna* itself generates love

89. R.K., II. p. 21-22.

of God in the devotee's heart,[90] because His Name is as potent as He.[91]

Rāmakṛṣṇa on the Means for the Attainment of Bhakti :

How should one conduct himself in his path to Divine Realisation ? Rāmakṛṣṇa's teachings are very elaborate on this point. First of all, one must have implicit faith in the words of his initiator (*guru*) and then must apply himself to the activity which his *guru* has asked him to do and on which he has been fully instructed. In the absence of a *guru*, he should pray to God to arouse His response. Mere intellectual discussions are of no avail and do not pay in the long run.[92]

The following are the media, as Rāmakṛṣṇa suggests, for the attainment of devotion to God :

(*i*) *Contact and communion with the holy and the pious* :

By coming in close touch with the accredited devotees and the pure-hearted, one facilitates and accelerates one's own spiritual progress.

(*ii*) *Constant chanting of God's Name and His glories* :

The efficacy of this medium has been discussed in detail in the preceding pages.

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90. R.K., II. pp. 33-34.
91. R.K., IV. p. 78.
92. R.K., I. p. 201.

(*iii*) *Practice of meditation in solitude* :

It is very difficult for an ordinary man to keep his mind fixed on God unless he is able to rise above the turmoil of the world and to take refuge in lonely and unfrequented places for meditation. Rāmakṛṣṇa points out that meditation should be done in the innermost recesses of the mind (*mane*), in a solitary corner in the house (*kone*), and in the forest (*vane*).

(*iv*) *Constant discernment of what is true and eternal as distinguished from what is false and ephemeral* :

God alone is true, while everything else is untrue.

As a fruit of this discrimination and discernment, the mind should be purged of everything which is non-eternal.[93]

Rāmakṛṣṇa on Bhakti, Its Stages and Classification ; Bhāva and Mahābhāva :

According to Rāmakṛṣṇa, devotion or *bhakti* ripens into the successive states of *bhāva*, *mahābhāva* and *prema*.[94] The last stage, if attained, makes a genuine

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93. R.K., I. p. 25.

94. The order of sequence between *mahābhāva* and *prema* given by Rāmakṛṣṇa, is different from what we find in the standard works of the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism. That *prema* or love leads to God-vision is admitted by both, but while

God-vision possible. An ordinary man, however sincere, may have *bhakti* and even *bhāva*, but the conversion of *bhāva* into *mahābhāva* and of *mahābhāva* into *prema* depends on the extent and intensity of his spiritual progress. Hence one who lovingly longs for God has gone ahead considerably along the path of spiritual progress like Caitanya. It is well known that the maximum development of love (*prema*) automatically reveals unto the *yogin* all the glory of the Divine Being just as it did in the case of Caitanya who had to pass through the following three distinct stages of mystic consciousness :

(*i*) *Antardaśā* : a state of pure intuition in which he used to have *samādhi*.

(*ii*) *Bāhyadaśā* : a state of fully awakened outer faculties in which the senses functioned in their customary manner—a state when he used to sing the glories of the Divine Name.

(*iii*) *Ardhabāhyadaśā* : a state of intermediate condition lying between the above two states in

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Rāmakṛṣṇa says that *mahābhāva* develops into *prema* (R. K., III. pp. 123-124.) the *Vaiṣṇava* works point out that *prema* develops into *mahābhāva* (cf. *Ujjvalanīlamaṇi* by Jīva Gosvāmin).

On one occasion we find Rāmakṛṣṇa saying that both *bhāva* and *mahābhāva* are attainable only after the realisation of God (R.K., I. p. 200). But he is also credited with the elucidation that an ordinary man cannot rise up beyond the stage of *bhāva*, while an extraordinary soul like Caitanya can attain the state of *mahābhāva* and *prema* (R.K., III. pp. 123-124).

which he could do nothing except dance in a state of rapture.[95]

The preliminary stage of *mahābhāva* is extremely painful to achieve, though when it is once established, there is nothing but joy. It is a Divine *bhāva* in which a great and agonising tension rages in the body and the mind. The consuming flame of intense love begins to burn in the devotee and even a moment's separation from the Beloved is unbearable. Under its impact the whole physical frame seems to disintegrate and the surroundings become vague. It is said that when Rūpa Gosvāmin and Sanātana Gosvāmin, the two celebrated disciples of Caitanya, were in this condition, the leaves of the tree under which they sat were burnt up in the fire of the pangs of separation (*viraha*) emanating from their bodies. Rāmakṛṣṇa himself, we are told, was unable to move at all for three days during his *mahābhāva*. It was very painful, but the subsequent condition, after the mystic realisation had been attained, was extremely joyful.[96]

Bhakti as an Act (Bhajana) and Its Classification :

Bhakti, concretised as an act (*bhajana*), is practised through the mind, the spirit and the body. Constant meditation on God and on His infinite and resplendent sports (*līlā*), is an example of mental *bhakti*. Singing the name and the glories of the Lord is the expres-

95. R.K., III. p. 86; IV. p. 29.
96. R.K., III. pp. 159-160.

sion of *bhakti* through speech. The dedication of the mind to His worship, the movement of the legs while going to His shrine, the activity of the ears in listening to scriptures like *Bhāgavata*, and looking at His Form — all these constitute physical *bhakti*.[97]

From the comparative predominance of the constituent *guṇas*, viz., (*sattva, rajas*, and *tamas*), *bhakti* is divided into three classes as follows :

(*i*) *Sāttvika-bhakti* :

The characteristic of *sāttvika-bhakti*, *i.e.*, *bhakti* predominated by *sattva guṇa*, is that the devotee is determined to pursue his path without any fuss or publicity. He does not want to be drawn into the limelight. His meditation and other activities are done far away from the common gaze.

(*ii*) *Rājasika-bhakti* :

The characteristic of this kind of *bhakti* is all for showing off. It is the *bhakti* on which the strong impact of the element of *rajas* or *rajoguṇa* is demonstrated.

The use of the sectarian marks on the body, of rosaries, garlands, etc., are the indications of the rise of *rājasika-bhakti*.

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97. Cf. Śaṅkarācārya's *stotra* in *Śivamānasapūjā* :

ātmā tvaṁ girijā matiḥ sahacarāḥ prāṇāḥ śarīraṁ gṛham .
pūjā te viṣayopabhogaracanā nidrā samādhi sthitiḥ ..
sañcāraḥ padayoḥ pradakṣiṇakramaḥ stotrāṇi sarvā giro .
yadyatkarma karomi tattadakhilaṁ śambho tavārādhanam ..

(*iii*) *Tāmasika-bhakti* :

> A man endowed with *tāmasika-bhakti* has burning faith. Such a devotee literally extorts boon from God, even as a robber falls upon his victim and plunders him crying — Bind ! Beat ! Kill !

But notwithstanding anything, it is sure that in *bhakti*, the intensity of faith is heightened, though the degree of intensity varies in different cases. With his heart suffused with *bhakti*, a devotee reduces the distance between himself and God, and looks up to Him as his dearest, and spontaneously and naturally lets out his heart to Him.[98]

Another classification usually made is between *jñāna-bhakti* and *prema-bhakti*. *Bhakti* may either be unalloyed love and adoration, or be tempered with knowledge. Hence one is called pure *bhakti* or *prema-bhakti* or *niṣṭhā-bhakti* and the other, the mixed *bhakti* or *jñāna-bhakti*. The love of the milkmaids (*gopīs*) of Vṛndāvana for *Kṛṣṇa* is an illustration of *prema-bhakti*. In this type of *bhakti* there is a sense of 'I-ness' (*ahaṁtā*) and 'my-ness' (*mamatā*) in one's relationship with God. Love and adoration is always a relation between the two. Such *bhaktas* consider the object of their adoration as their own. It is their depth of love for God which inundates their inner beings with *prema-bhakti*. In the mixed type of *bhakti*, however, there is a consciousness that God is *Para Brahman* and that *Rāma*, *Śiva* and *Śakti* are all His manifestations. Such consciousness is arrived at partly through intellectual inquiry

98. R.K., I. pp. 66-67.

and partly through love.[99] In its highest manifestations, of which Rāmakṛṣṇa's own life is a glowing example, *bhakti* becomes a sort of mania, a state of near-madness which is liable to appear in different lights to different types of people. At such times the rules laid down by the ancient scriptures, including the *Vedas*, lose their significance for the *bhakta*.[100]

It sometimes happens that the *bhakta*'s love remains unreciprocated. Whether it is so or not, the true lover does not care for the return of his love. In Rāmakṛṣṇa's terminology, such love is called *ekāṅgī prema*, which is actually another name for *niṣkāma bhakti*.

Rāmakṛṣṇa on the Vision of Divine Form through Divine Love (Bhakti); Means of God-vision :

It is possible to have a realisation of the Divine Form, as well as of the Formless Divine, along the path of the love of God, which is the maturest expression of *bhakti*, and is described by such terms as *rāga* or *prema*. Thus, in the pursuit of God-realisation, the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī* is of course presupposed; for, without this, there cannot be any progress in the path of the soul's journey towards

99. R.K., II. pp. 53-54.

100. R.K., II. p. 64.

God.[101] The most important milestones along the path to God-vision are as follows :

(*i*) *Viveka* : the sense of discrimination between the eternal and the transitory.

(*ii*) *Vairāgya* : detachment from worldly possessions and worldly activities.

(*iii*) *Anurāga* : fervent attachment to God.

(*iv*) *Tyāga* : renunciation and surrender of everything to God. There is a vast difference between the knowledge of a worldly man and of one who has renounced the world.[102]

Knowledge of God, therefore, differs widely even among the *bhaktas* according to the degree and extent of the spiritual progress. The lowest *bhakta* is aware of the presence of God rather vaguely and remotely. The next higher type of *bhakta* realises God not as a vague presence, but as Consciousness in every living object. In the highest state, the *bhakta* feels that God Himself has assumed infinite forms, so that every object which our eyes come in contact with is verily God Himself. The entire world is a multitudinous and variegated manifestation of His Essence, His supreme *līlā*; and the human soul emanates from Him.[103]

In his teachings, Rāmakṛṣṇa emphasises that God-vision (or, for that matter, the revelation of any of His

101. R.K., IV. p. 59.
102. R.K., III. p. 95.
103. R.K., III. p. 46.

Forms unto the devotee) takes place when there is a strong upward movement of the bio-motor force, accompanied by a suspension of all outer physical consciousness. The spiritual current (*mahāvāyu*) moves up along the spine towards the brain, resulting in *samādhi* and the Beatific Vision.[104] Glorious Forms are manifested one after another in the serene sky of the inner heart (*cidākāśa*) like bright bubbles of water springing up from the ocean. The manifestation of such Forms is a part of the divine sport of the Primordial Energy, the Mother (*Ādyā Śakti*).[105]

Rāmakṛṣṇa on Three Types of Divine Love :

Rāmakṛṣṇa refers to three types of love, viz., (*i*) *Sādhāraṇī*, (*ii*) *Samañjasā*, and (*iii*) *Samarthā*. Evidently, in this classification Rāmakṛṣṇa is basing himself upon the theology of the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism. These categories can be illustrated and explained as follows :

(*i*) *Sādhāraṇī* :

According to Rāmakṛṣṇa the category of lover called *sādhāraṇī* is one who seeks exclusively his or her own pleasure or gratification.

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104. "*bhitar theke mahāvāyu gar gar kare uṭhe māthār dike jāy, takhan yadi samādhi hay, bhagavāner darśan hay*"—Rāmakṛṣṇa. R.K., I. p. 127.

105. R.K., IV. p. 11.

(*ii*) *Samañjasā* :

A *samañjasā* lover is one who seeks for the pleasure and joy both of himself and herself and his or her beloved.

(*iii*) *Samarthā* :

The *samarthā* lover is the most elevated and perfect one, who aims at the happiness of the loved one even at his or her own cost.[106]

It is evident that, though Rāmakṛṣṇa's leaning is towards the path of *bhakti*, he does not fail to assign a proper place to each of the different forms of *yoga*. He points out repeatedly that *bhakti* is the easiest and surest way. The special benefits of the diverse paths of *jñāna* and *yoga* can be derived from the practice of *bhakti*, while the uniqueness of *bhakti* gives it a place of its own eminence. A *bhakta* can easily awaken his *kuṇḍalinī* by virtue of the strength of his *bhakti* alone, and is not required to pass through the rigours of psycho-physical exercises.[107]

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106. It is curious that Rāmakṛṣṇa considers Candrāvalī (R.K., II. p. 246) as an example of *sādhāraṇī*. The classical example of *sādhāraṇī* is Kubjā. Candrāvalī, according to the Bengal Vaiṣṇavas, belongs to the category of *samarthā*. She is distinguished from Rādhā in regard to the essential quality of her love (*rāga*). To explain this difference, Rādhā's love (*rāga*) for Kṛṣṇa is called *raktimā* while that of Candrāvalī is called *nīlimā*.

107. R.K. IV. p. 59.

Three Grades of Bhaktas :

Rāmakṛṣṇa refers to the three grades of *bhaktas* thus :

(*i*) *The Uttama Bhakta* :

These are the superior type of devotees (*bhaktas*) who have realised God and who fully realise that the soul and the world are His manifestations. To these *bhaktas*, nothing exists except God.

(*ii*) *The Madhyama Bhakta* :

These are of intermediate type of devotees who have realised God as the indwelling and immanent spirit (*antaryāmin*) in all living objects.

(*iii*) *The Adhama Bhakta* :

These devotees affirm that God is extra-cosmic, existing beyond space; he prays to Him, in spite of his knowledge that He is far away from him.[108]

Rāmakṛṣṇa on Resignation as the Surest Means of Divine Grace :

A pilgrim on the path of devotion is expected to cultivate the virtue of resignation or surrender to God's Will in a special measure. As it is not possible to have the world as we would like it to be, it is just proper to dedicate everything to

108. R.K., III. pp. 46, 75, 120-121.

Him, and make Him ultimately responsible for all actions in which we may be engaged. But a condition antecedent to such a dedication is the realisation in the depths of our being as to how poor and weak we are, and how wonderful God is. The sense of doership being eliminated as a result of complete surrender of the soul to God, the light of the truth — that, in all the affairs of the world and beyond, His Will alone fulfils itself in various ways — dawns on the soul.[109]

Though resignation certainly is the surest means of securing Divine favour, an aspirant cannot take recourse to it in the early stages of his *sādhanā*. He has to do his duty, gather experience of the world, and develop the power of discernment. After the earlier stages have been covered, he finds in the long run that no human efforts lead him to success in God-realisation, and ultimately he has to take refuge in the unfailing Grace of God. If the prayer for grace is sincere, the response is bound to be sure and spontaneous.[110]

10

Rāmakṛṣṇa on the Path of Divine Knowledge (Jñāna-mārga) as a Means of God-realisation :

The path of knowledge (*jñāna-yoga*) leads to the realisation of the formless Brahman (*nirguṇa Brahman*).

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109. R.K., I. p. 206.
110. R.K., I. p. 181; III. pp. 67, 126, 217; IV. p. 39.

It is a very difficult path indeed, and few aspirants are capable of travelling along this path. On the other hand, infinitely rich spiritual experience is possible to the seeker, who by the process of negation (*neti neti*) holds in abeyance the objects of senses. The mind is dissolved in the final state of *jñāna-yoga*.[111]

Hence comes the emphasis on the importance of *samādhi*, in the midst of which the mind is filled with a silence and peace that passes all comprehension, with all thoughts and excogitations being set at rest. It is in this state, when the mind is completely dissolved, that the vision of *Brahman* dawns upon the mind. The silence which reigns in the wake of the origin of knowledge may continue or it may break for the edification and elevation of humanity. In the latter case a trace of the ego or the mind is retained in order to teach and instruct others. The retention of the ego is discernible in the lives of some devotees pursuing the path of knowledge, and what is remarkable, the retention of the shadow or semblance of the ego, in all these cases, is never a hindrance. But it also follows that all thoughts, discussions, etc., regarding *Brahman* exist so long as the Beatific Vision has not been secured. But once the Vision is unfolded before the devotee, all discussions and thoughts melt into thin air, and in exceptional cases only, the semblance of ego is left behind.[112]

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111. R.K., III. p. 92.
112. R.K., II. pp. 9-10.

Knowledge (*jñāna*) may be either integral or fragmentary. The former is indicated by complete obliteration of the difference between the master and his servant, or between '*I*' and '*Thou*', or between *meum* and *teum*. In the initial stages of development, it seems as if God alone were real, and everything else false. But in the subsequent stages, it becomes clear that it is God who has converted Himself into *māyā*, the soul, and the universe. It is necessary on the part of the devotee, at first, to turn away from the world and realise God in His Pure Self. But after this realisation has been effected, it is found that the soul and the different elements of the universe represent but the multitudinous aspects of the Divine. This is, in brief, the integral knowledge (*akhaṇḍa-jñāna*). Fragmentary knowledge (*khaṇḍa-jñāna*), on the other hand, refers to knowledge which limits God to one object and thinks that beyond it God does not exist.[113]

The rise of knowledge is marked by a sense of the futility of the ego and the quietness of one's nature. In integral knowledge, discursive thought is completely transcended. It is only when a man has realised God that he finds nothing but God alone manifested in the world of soul and matter. Attainment of knowledge elevates a man above all questions of morals — good or bad, simply because knowledge gives him the supreme realisation that God is everything.[114]

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113. R.K., III. pp. 74-75.

114. R.K., II. p. 30; III. pp. 225, 227, 246; cf. *Gītā*, VI. 22; VII. 19.

In Rāmakṛṣṇa's teachings it is repeatedly emphasised that a mind tainted with a desire for wealth or worldly pleasure (*kāma-kāñcana*) cannot serve as a fit receptacle for the knowledge of *Brahman* (*Brahma-jñāna*). Strict restrictions on one's conduct and movement and self-discipline are essential in the earlier stages of one's culture, when the mind is still immature. But after sufficient self-development, such restrictions become unnecessary. The development here spoken of means the attainment of the power of discrimination (*viveka*), which gives one the conviction that God alone is real and everything else is unreal. On the awakening of this sense, a desire for God-realisation fills the heart. The importance of the power of discrimination thus lies in the fact that the pursuit of the Divine ideal becomes possible only after the enlightened *viveka* helps distinguish right from wrong. The origin of this *viveka* is consequent upon a feeling of aversion for worldly enjoyments. Discrimination (*viveka*) is followed by an intuition of truth, which in its turn is followed by a keen desire for elevation to the divine level. Once God is realised, all desires are fulfilled.[115]

God Alone Is the Object of Knowledge; Signs of the Origin of Divine Knowledge :

God alone is the proper object of man's knowledge. There is no end to the knowledge of the

115. R.K., I. pp. 133-134.

Divine. Knowledge born of a pure mind, free from worldly attachments, can have a vision of the Divine Form capable of satisfying the aspirations and desires of the human soul, though the Divine is revealed to us not exactly as it is in Itself, but only to the extent of our requirements and capacities. A man cannot go beyond his capacities, and hence should not attempt the impossible.[116]

There are certain signs which indicate the dawning of Divine Knowledge. In the *Bhāgavata* the state of the *jñānin* is likened to that of a child (*bālavat*), an inert being incapable of moving about (*jaḍavat*), a madman (*unmattavat*), and an uncultured person insensible to the rules of conduct governing civilised communities (*piśācavat*). These states are indications of the dawn of knowledge. On the eve of the arrival of knowledge, the *jñānin* renounces *karma*. The analogy of *piśāca* further shows that the perfect *jñānin* does not discriminate between the pure and the impure.[117]

The experience of a *jñānin,* in the midst of the fruition of his quest, is one of unruffled harmony expressive of a constant unceasing flow. He remains absolutely poised in his own self, and looks at everything else as a dream. Still, there are ebbs and flows in the heart of a devotee; otherwise why should he alternately laugh, weep, dance and sing like a madman (*unmattavat*)? In one of these typical God-

116. R.K., I. pp. 135-226.
117. R.K., III. p. 216.

intoxicated moods, his heart leaps up at the prospect of meeting his Beloved. His position in the world, likewise, undergoes strange oscillations and movements. Sometimes he feels like skimming on the surface of the ocean of *Saccidānanda*, and sometimes diving into its depths.[118]

11

Rāmakṛṣṇa's Comparison of Bhakti-yoga and Jñāna-yoga as Means of Divine Realisation :

The path of knowledge (*jñāna-yoga*) and the path of devotion (*bhakti-yoga*) are equally good. In the former, one has to proceed gradually through reasoning and mental cogitation. The reasoning is pivoted upon the postulate that *Brahman* alone is real and that everything else, *i.e.*, the world, is unreal. For a soul living under the limitations of the present ultra-materialistic age, it is difficult to come to a clear understanding of this truth. The consciousness of Pure Self or *Brahman* can never be possible so long as the sense of identity with the body continues. All metaphysical reasoning, however sound, is inadequate to destroy body-consciousness. *Samādhi* through the path of knowledge, therefore, is a rare spiritual acquisition, inasmuch as it presupposes complete annihilation of ego. The path of devotion, however, is easier and assures quicker results. Hence for a devotee, the pure

118. R.K., I. p. 116 ; III. p. 121.

ego, the fruit of true devotion, is indeed a great help, enabling him to have God-vision. This is *bhakti-yoga*.

The eclectic and refreshingly liberal spirit which highlights Rāmakṛṣṇa's teachings, gains an added importance by the fact that his teachings are the fruit of both *God-vision* and *Brahman-realisation* which he had in his life. But he was personally averse to the continuity of the state in which he was identified with *Brahman*. Having a body and being subjected to its limitations, he felt that the most desirable experience from his point of view was a sense of master-servant relation between God and the soul. Rāmakṛṣṇa mostly desired the fifth plane in the path of Knowledge, *i.e.*, the plane in which the seeker is engrossed in the realisation of the master-servant relation. From this plane, he used to ascend to the next higher plane, but would always gladly descend to the fifth plane again. Rāmakṛṣṇa is credited with an ascent even to the seventh plane, but he would never stay long in it, either. About this he explains that the ego-sense expressed in the judgement '*so'ham*' is certainly injurious to a man until he has been able to transcend his egoistic consciousness. In view of this, a gradual and compulsory descent cannot be avoided.[119] Finally he says that though *jñāna* and *bhakti* are distinguished from each other, they meet on a higher plane where both are pure.[120]

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119. R.K., I. p. 293.
120. R.K., I. p. 117.

12

Rāmakṛṣṇa on Seven Planes of Mental Evolution and Four Spiritual Stages : (*i*) *Pravartaka*, (*ii*) *Sādhaka*, (*iii*) *Siddha*, and (*iv*) *Siddher-siddha* :

The seven planes, just referred to, represent the six gradually ascending centres in the evolution of mind. When the mind is attached to the world and its pleasure, the *kuṇḍalinī* resides in one of the three lowest centres. No higher state of mind is possible during these stages. With the dawning of superconsciousness (*caitanya*), the *kuṇḍalinī* reaches the heart. The seeker sees a refulgence all round the heart. At this higher centre, the individual self becomes an object of vision, appearing like a luminous flame.[121] The mind at this centre becomes rapt in meditation and remains unconcerned with the world. Still fur-

121. Rāmakṛṣṇa refers to the first awakening of consciousness in the fourth centre, *i.e.*, when the mind reaches the heart in its upward ascent. This should be distinguished from the first manifestation of the mystic consciousness which takes place at the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī*. The ascent of the mind, after the first rumblings of awakening, from the first to the third centre, is associated with the lower, *i.e.*, worldly thoughts. But when the third centre is crossed and the fourth is reached, the serene light which dawns upon it, is the light of spiritual illumination. The true awakening, according to Rāmakṛṣṇa, is synchronous with the *kuṇḍalinī* reaching the fourth centre, at which, the mind established a harmony with the heart. What is intended to be conveyed by this, is that the true spiritual progress cannot be effected until the mind is released from its association with the activities of the three lower centres and rests quietly in the tranquil space of the heart, undisturbed by the obstreperous elements of worldly existence. R.K., I. pp. 72-73; IV. pp. 132-133.

ther up, when the *kuṇḍalinī* reaches the larynx, mind becomes engrossed in the contemplation of the Divine. A vision of the glorious Form of the Divine follows, when the *kuṇḍalinī* reaches the sixth centre in the forehead, between the two eyebrows. An irresistible yearning for embracing the Form fills the mind, but it is not immediately fulfilled. At the seventh plane, in the crown of the head, the mind becomes immersed in *samādhi*; the ego completely disappears and a direct vision of God ensues. It is a wonderful state which defies description; and, moreover, all human faculties seem to stop functioning in the process of a grasp of this experience. Naturally, the strain of such an experience tells unfavourably upon the physical system. It is a state in which the mind is lost to all outer consciousness and even to the internal activities of the system. The body cannot, under such circumstances, get any nutrition, nor can it assimilate anything. It is the state of a *Brahmajñānin,* and Rāmakṛṣṇa points out from personal realisation, that one cannot remain in this state beyond twenty-one days.[122] Rāmakṛṣṇa's illustration of this is drawn from the epics. He points out the case of King Janaka, an illustrious mystic in his time, who used to teach the Supreme Wisdom (*Brahmajñāna*) from the fifth centre; this was his usual plane of activity, but occasionally he used to ascend and stay in the sixth plane.[123]

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122. R.K., I. pp. 72-73, 89; IV. pp. 132-133, 141; V. p. 59.

123. 'M', the author of *Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta,* attributes to Rāmakṛṣṇa the following statement at the end of the conversa-

In course of his teachings Rāmakṛṣṇa refers to the four stages of the spiritual path. The four stages may be summed up as follows :

(*i*) *Pravartaka* :

This is the first stage in which the seeker has just reached the portals of spiritual life. He conforms to all the outer formalities of the sectarian life. A seeker at this stage is known by the appellation *pravartaka.*

(*ii*) *Sādhaka* :

The next stage represents a decisive advance on the former, in so far as the formalities disappear and a sincere craving for God-realisation comes. Simplicity, earnestness and spontaneous devotion mark this stage. The seeker is now called a *sādhaka*.

(*iii*) *Siddha* :

This is a stage of perfection which brings about the consciousness and conviction that God

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tion, on the stages (*bhūmis*) and centres (*cakras*) of *Vedānta* and *Yoga* respectively. R.K., V. p. 59. Rāmakṛṣṇa says :

"*kintu kula-kuṇḍalinīr jāgaraṇa nā hale caitanya hayanā*",

— *i.e.*, until the *kula-kuṇḍalinī* is roused there cannot be any genuine spiritual awakening.

The spiritual hunger, as Rāmakṛṣṇa says elsewhere, is roused even at the first three centres, to be progressively consummated with the ascent to the next higher centres. The serpentine power (*kuṇḍalinī-śakti*) which lies dormant in man, is progressively roused more and more into activity as the spiritual ascent continues.

is not only immanent but the actual supervisor of all activities. From such a deep conviction an actual perception of the Divine Being follows, giving the right to the seeker to call himself a *siddha*.

(*iv*) *Siddher-siddha* :

But the highest or the super-perfect is one who not only sees God, but enters into a definite personal relationship with Him, even holding actual conversation with Him.[124]

13

Rāmakṛṣṇa on Vijñāna which Follows Brahmajñāna :

From what has been said above, the conception of *Brahmajñāna vis-a'-vis* Rāmakṛṣṇa's personal realisations and teachings, must have been made sufficiently clear. The onset of this *jñāna* brings to an end the interference of the lower mind and the ego. It results in *samādhi* in which the ego is destroyed never to reappear. In exceptional cases, however, the ego appears again after *Brahmajñāna*, though in a pure form. This is true about the best and most elevated type of *bhakta*, *i.e.*, a seeker pursuing the path of devotion, who has a vision of the Supreme Reality and to whom the entire creation is an expression of the Divine Reality. The negative process of pursuing the

124. R.K., I. pp. 109, 114; III. pp. 190-191.

Supreme Reality (*Brahman*) along the path of knowledge, on the other hand, starts at the initial stage by rejecting everything known or knowable as things other than *Brahman*; but it finds its consummation in a positive universal experience in which it is actually perceived that *Brahman* has become the world, the soul, and matter. This state which comes after *Brahma-jñāna* is called a state of higher *bhakti* or *Vijñāna*. A spiritual state better than this can hardly be conceived.

A homely illustration, drawn from Rāmakṛṣṇa's teachings, will go to make the point clear. If a man has only heard of milk, but has not seen it, he is said to be one who is nearly ignorant about it (*ajñānin*). By the positive term *jñānin,* on the other hand, is meant one who has seen milk, but has not tasted it. But one who is above both, who has not only heard about milk and seen it but also has tasted it, is said to have attained *Vijñāna*. So it is with regard to a seeker who has realised the Supreme *Brahman*. To be able to hold conversation with the Divine Presence during the Vision, as if He were the seeker's kith and kin, is *Vijñāna*. When the seeker is established in *Vijñāna*, he continues to live in the world with the deepest spiritual conviction that God is not only outside the world, but is also immanent in it.

Thus it is through *Vijñāna* only that a man can realise the Divine, in both its aspects of *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa*. The paths of *jñāna, jñāna-bhakti* and *bhakti* are equally true and all lead to God. So long as the ego is retained, the path of *bhakti* is the easiest.

To the *Vijñānin*, *Brahman* is static and silent. It is the Eternal Unity which is the truth and essence of all things. He has recourse to *bhakti* due to the fact that he willingly keeps a trace of pure ego.[125]

It is thus clear that the natural state of the human mind represents a condition of ignorance (*ajñāna*). It is a condition in which the mind remains engrossed in diverse worldly interests, and is unable to focus its energies on a fixed point and direct it along a fixed channel. It is in fact a state of mental restlessness in which it is not possible to realise any truth, far less the truth of the Divine Essence. But in course of time, through persistent spiritual culture and discipline, the mind becomes sufficiently concentrated and begins to discover the existence of the Divine Principle in the diversities of Nature. This bare acquaintance of a unitary principle in nature is called Illumination of Knowledge (*jñāna*). As soon as it develops into a firm conviction that the God alone has become all this visible and invisible creation, it is called *Vijñāna*. When ignorance or *ajñāna* is destroyed, *jñāna* appears. When *jñāna* is transcended, the mellowed radiance of *Vijñāna* prevails.[126]

It has been observed that *jñāna* cannot exhaust the Divine Being. It should be remembered that even in the state of *Vijñāna,* one cannot know God beyond the extent to which He allows His Infinitude to be known.[127] The world is unreal and yet real.

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125. 125. R.K., III. pp. 11-13.
126. 126. R.K., I. p. 23; II. p. 256; III. pp. 197-246.
127. 127. R.K., I. pp. 226.

It is unreal to a *jñānin*; but to one who is beyond *jñāna* and *ajñāna,* it is intensely real. For one like this, the world and all its elements are expressions of the Divine. At the same time it also means that a human soul after God-realisation develops perfect detachment during the tenure of his mortal existence. The pursuit of knowledge, howsoever steadfast, persistent, and correct, cannot deliver the goods unless it is saturated with the yearning of a devoted soul. It may lead to the realisation of *Brahman*, but it cannot ensure the everlasting life of a *bhakta* after this realisation. It is the knowledge saturated with the deepest ardour of love and devotion (*bhakti*), which is the Highest Knowledge (*Vijñāna*).[128]

As has been already said, it is possible to know God fully and vitally only after *ajñāna* and *jñāna* have been transcended. According to Rāmakṛṣṇa, knowledge of many is *ajñāna*, and the knowledge of one is *jñāna*. Similarly, the vanity based on formal learning is also nothing but *ajñāna*. On the other hand, the conviction that God lives everywhere and in every object, is *jñāna*. To know God intimately in all details, in all His special forms, is called *Vijñāna*. *Jñāna* is needed to remove *ajñāna*. But when *ajñāna* is eliminated, *jñāna* also needs to be discarded. A *jñānin* stands the risk of backsliding into *ajñāna,* but there is no such risk for a *Vijñānin*.[129]

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128. R.K., IV. p. 169.
129. R.K., I. p. 292.

14

Rāmakṛṣṇa on the Absolute, Its Static and Dynamic Aspects; The Mystic Significance of Praṇava :

We have already dwelt upon Rāmakṛṣṇa's views in regard to the Absolute. The importance he assigns to the views is clear from the recurring emphasis which is found in his teachings. It may be summed up as below.

Rāmakṛṣṇa very often speaks of the Absolute in its twofold aspect of Static (Being) and Dynamic (Play), or as he used to call it in his own way, *nitya* and *līlā*. The dynamic side springs out of the static and constitutes the play of the Eternal Being, and reverts to the static state. He had a personal experience of the infinite ocean of consciousness (*cidākāśa*) bubbling up into infinite waves and wavelets. Each of the twin processes, of descent and ascent between the static and the dynamic, is accompanied by a corresponding sound. The two processes of creative activity (*sṛṣṭhi*) and of its counterpart (*pralaya*) may be likened respectively to the ringing of the bell and of the gradual fading away of its sound. The mystic sound called *praṇava* or *oṁkāra*, symbolical of the cosmic process referred to in the foregoing paragraphs, represents the withdrawal of the physical (*sthūla*) into the subtle (*sūkṣma*), and of the subtle into the causal (*kāraṇa*), and of the causal into the supercausal (*mahākāraṇa*) — a process which bears a faint analogy to the gradual fading away of the bell-sound, as mentioned above. The creative process,

on the other hand, implies a movement from the supercausal through the causal, and of the subtle in the direction of the physical. Worldly life evolves from the Eternal so that the three mundane states of dreamless sleep (*suṣupti*), dream (*svapna*), and waking (*jāgrat*) are really an outer expression, arranged in an order of gradual externalisation, of the Eternal and featureless *Turīya*. *Turīya,* which is the fourth state, represents the Highest Knowledge. When the sound of *praṇava* is heard, after the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*, it makes intelligible the entire process of externalisation and it lapses into a state of luminosity, where the mind, as we know it, no longer exists (*manonāśa*).[130]

15

Rāmakṛṣṇa on God-realisation, Jīvanmukti, and Service to Humanity :

Rāmakṛṣṇa lays great stress on such action as may help him attain Supreme Realisation, particularly in the earlier stages of spiritual life. He considers it presumptuous for a lay and ordinary man to think of doing good to the world. An ordinary man of the world, with all his limitations of knowledge and power, can hardly do any good to the world of which he knows nothing. The first duty of a man, therefore, is to realise God and get suffused with His

130. R.K., I. p. 214.

power, so that he may freely serve humanity without getting entangled in the snares of the world. Service to humanity thus follows God-vision and never precedes or supersedes it. This does not mean, however, that a man should abstain from all activities before Realisation. Whatever action comes to him as a part of his duty should be performed in a distinterested spirit (*karma-yoga*); and at the same time he prays earnestly for the revelation of God. Rāmakṛṣṇa maintains that, although involved in work, one should never lose sight of one's supreme goal of God-realisation by losing oneself in the activities of the world.[131]

The liberated person (*jīvanmukta*) is one whose sense of identity with the body disappears with the realisation of God. Such a man is not affected by the pleasures and pains of the body; nor does he seek worldly pleasures. God-realisation gives distinguishing propensities to an elevated soul. Tears flow from his eyes and there are horripilations in his body at the mere mention of 'God' to him. Needless to say, in this stage all attachment to the pleasures of wealth and of sex-life is reduced to dust.[132]

Rāmakṛṣṇa's liberality is expressed most vividly in his attitude towards the ordinary man of the world. He says that an ordinary man of the world is as much entitled to the bliss of freedom from the fetters of the world (*jīvanmukti*) as one who has

131. R.K., I. p. 59.
132. R.K., I. p. 207.

renounced the world. The essential precondition for this great spiritual freedom in life is attainment of knowledge, which may take place even when one is in the world. Once freed, a man may stay on in the world or renounce it; to him all states, positions, and places are one and the same.

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Chapter II

VIJAYAKṚṢṆA GOSVĀMIN

1

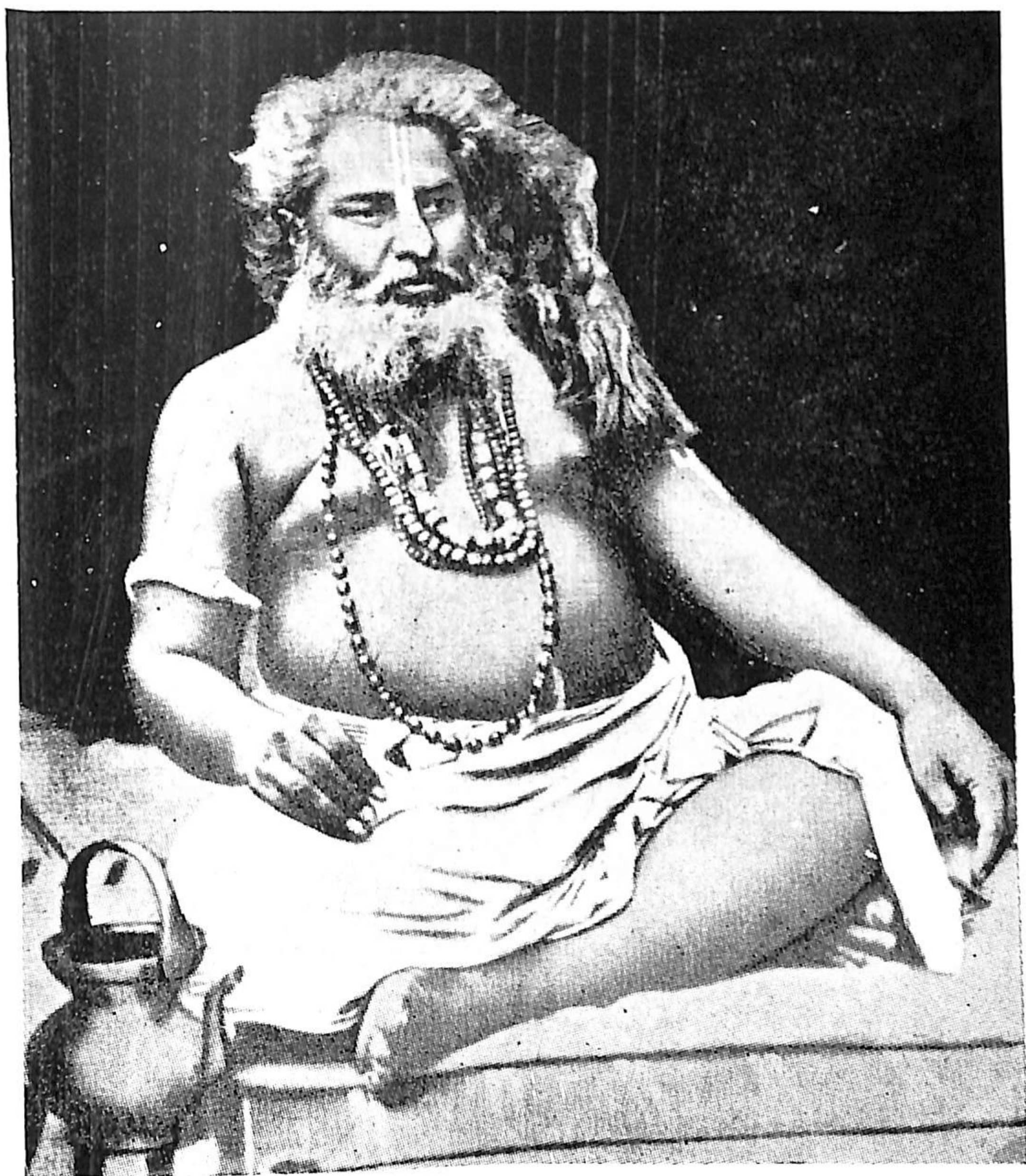
Birth, parentage, and early spiritual traits — Vijayakṛṣṇa's *upanayana*; Vijayakṛṣṇa as a *kula-guru* after his own *dīkṣā* from his mother — His early education and marriage — Influence of Brāhmo Samāja and his entrance into Brāhmofold — Vijayakṛṣṇa as a preacher of Brāhmoism (*upācārya*) — Vijayakṛṣṇa's missionary work at various places — Vijayakṛṣṇa's visionary *dīkṣā* under Caitanya — Vijayakṛṣṇa's thirst for *sadguru*; his *dīkṣā*, *sādhanā*, and *siddhi* — His pilgrimage; Vijayakṛṣṇa again giving *dīkṣā* — Vijayakṛṣṇa's dissociation with Brāhmo Samāja — Establishment of *āśrama* at Genḍeriā; Vijayakṛṣṇa's life at Puri and his passing away.

2

Vijayakṛṣṇa as a mystic — Vijayakṛṣṇa's supranormal experiences in early life; predilections for mystic life — Turning point and change of Vijayakṛṣṇa's outlook; influence of saintly persons — Chief characteristics of Vijayakṛṣṇa's spiritual consciousness — Necessity of *sadguru*; Vijayakṛṣṇa's visionary *dīkṣā* under Caitanya — Discovery of a *guru* by Vijayakṛṣṇa and initiation under him — Vijayakṛṣṇa's *sādhanā* : *nāma-japa*, *nādānusandhāna*, *prāṇāyāma*, *trāṭaka*, etc. — Heat in Vijayakṛṣṇa's body during his *nāma-sādhanā* — The fire of Name (*nāmāgni*) — Other psycho-physical effects of *nāma-sādhanā* — Vijayakṛṣṇa's early realisation at Dacca — Vijayakṛṣṇa's progressive realisation of Divine Glory.

3

Vijayakṛṣṇa's *sādhanā*; its antiquity.



Vijayakṛṣṇa Gosvāmin
(1841 — 1899)

4

Vijayakṛṣṇa on the place of *sadguru* in spiritual life — Relation between *guru* and his disciple — The *sadguru*'s sheltering role — Faith in *guru* — The advent of *sadguru* — *Guru* essentially Divine Consciousness and identical with *Brahman* — Aim of life *vis-à-vis* positive Realisation.

5

Vijayakṛṣṇa on grace and human effort — Vijayakṛṣṇa on *dīkṣā*; two kinds of *dīkṣā*; *Vaidika* and *Tāntrika* — Opportune moment for *dīkṣā*.

6

Vijayakṛṣṇa on *yoga* and its kinds — Vijayakṛṣṇa on important elements of *yoga*, viz., (*a*) *brahmacarya*, (*b*) *satya*, (*c*) *ahiṁsā*, and (*d*) *vairāgya* — Other cardinal virtues conducive to *yoga*, viz., (*i*) *śauca*, (*ii*) *kṣamā*, and (*iii*) *kṣānti* — Vices to be avoided, viz., *kāma*, *krodha*, and *lobha* — Vijayakṛṣṇa on *yogic* disciplines : (*i*) *āsana*, (*ii*) *prāṇāyāma*, (*iii*) *kumbhaka*, (*iv*) *pratyāhāra*, (*v*) *dhāraṇā*, (*vi*) *dṛṣṭisādhanā* or *trāṭaka*, (*vii*) *dhyāna*, (*viii*) *ekāgratā*, *and* (*ix*) *samādhi*.

7

Vijayakṛṣṇa on *nāma-sādhanā* — The practice of *nāma-japa*— Rules for the practice of the Name — True *sannyāsa* versus householder's life (*gṛhasthāśrama*).

8

Vijayakṛṣṇa on the ego-sense — The *jīvātman* or the individual self — Freedom of will.

9

Vijayakṛṣṇa on the doctrine of *karma* — Methods for counteracting *prārabdha karma* — Vijayakṛṣṇa's further views on the doctrine of *karma* — Vijayakṛṣṇa on human suffering and its duration.

1

Birth, Parentage, and Early Spiritual Traits :

Vijayakṛṣṇa was born in the year 1841, in an illustrious and pious Brāhmin family of Śāntipur, West Bengal, and was a descendant of the great Advaitācārya, the saint-companion of Caitanya. His father Ānanda Kishore Gosvāmin and mother Svarṇamayī were pious, and devoted to their family deity Śyāmasundara.[1]

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1. A form of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Vijayakṛṣṇa had charming features, and a well-built body. The locks of hair on his head further added to his handsomeness. He was jolly and was full of fun in his childhood and at the same time very tenacious and of assertive will. Even as a mere child he loved to put on the garb of a mendicant (*saṃnyāsin*) as if by way of an unconscious pointer towards his future career.

As a child he used to play with Śyāmasundara, the family deity, and chastise him to take food and reciprocate his own love as a friend. At the age of five, it is told, tears rolled down his cheeks while he listened with rapt attention to the stories of Dhruva and Prahlāda, the ideal devotees of God, celebrated in the legends. He was a very eager spectator at the *yātrā* performances, an indigenous mimetic performance. He was also fond of participating in musical parties where devotional songs were sung. From his early childhood, we are told, Vijayakṛṣṇa used to have ecstasies.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's Upanayana; Vijayakṛṣṇa as a Kula-guru after His Own Dīkṣā from His Mother :

Vijayakṛṣṇa's sacred thread ceremony, which took place in 1850, was shortly followed by his initiation (*dīkṣā*) by his own mother. His family being one of hereditary *Vaiṣṇava gurus,* it was incumbent on him, after his own *dīkṣā* was over, to initiate disciples according to the tradition of the family. He

began and continued the practice of giving *dīkṣā* from that time on.

His Early Education and Marriage :

Having completed his course of elementary Saṁskrit study in the village school (*tol*), he proceeded to Calcutta in 1859 for higher education. He joined the Vedānta class of the Government Saṁskrit College. In the same year he was married to Yogamāyā Devī, the daughter of Rāmacandra Bhādurī of Śikārpukur in West Bengal.

Influence of Brāhmo Samāja and His Entrance into Brāhmofold :

A close acquaintance with the *Vedāntic* literature, especially with that which related to the monistic school of Śaṅkarācārya, produced an appreciable change in his philosophical outlook. Believing that, as everything was *Brahman* and he himself was no exception to it, he lost his faith in the value of the formal and ritualistic mode of image-worship (*upāsanā*) and left all rituals. The *bhakti* element in him became dried up under the steady rays of the monistic ontology which he, from now on, began to devour avidly. But he was not destined to lead such a life. A particular incident changed his mind altogether. One of his disciples at Raṅgpur came to him, fell at his feet and implored for his saving grace. This set him

thinking. He thought that as he himself was not free from *māyā*, it was unfair on his part to think of taking upon himself the responsibility of saving others from bondage. It would be an act of hypocrisy and fraud, than which nothing could be more odious to him. He made up his mind. He must stop giving formal initiation (*dīkṣā*) to others. It was roughly during this period that he joined the medical college to study medicine.

It was at this time that he came into contact with the venerable Maharṣi Devendra Nath Tagore, father of the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore. His saint-like dignified appearance and burning religious zeal moved the young Vijayakṛṣṇa so much that he felt an impelling inner urge to join the Brāhmo Samāja, of which the Maharṣi was the head. Shortly afterwards he actually came within its fold. As a Brāhmo, believing in a unitary God and rejecting all the formularies and rituals of the conventional Hindu religion, he lost no time in discarding the sacred thread. He also became a member of the Saṅgat Sabhā established by Keśava Candra Sen, another great Brāhmo preacher of the time, with whom he became familiar within a short while.

Vijayakṛṣṇa as a Preacher of Brāhmoism (Upācārya):

In 1864, Vijayakṛṣṇa was appointed the high priest (*upācārya*) of the Brāhmo Samāja, and this shows how his inherent genius helped him make a profound mark so quickly in the midst of new ideas and new people.

He left his medical studies, and in his exuberance and proselytising fervour, started on a regular missionary campaign, in the course of which he succeeded in converting a number of Hindu families of old persuasions into Brāhmoism. He was an inspiring preacher with an edifying spirit of sincerity and devotion in him. On account of his high moral character he was held in high estimation by all with whom he came into contact.

But there were acute differences of opinion in the Brāhmo Samāja itself, owing to which the organisation got split into two camps — the Ādi Brāhmo Samāja headed by Devendra Nath Tagore, and the Bhāratvarṣīya Brāhmo Samāja headed by Keśava Candra Sen. This conflict and mutual disagreement gave a rude shock to Vijayakṛṣṇa and made his mind extremely uneasy. He left Calcutta and went to Śāntipur, a small market-town, a little west of Calcutta. At Śāntipur he met a *Vaiṣṇava* devotee who asked him to read *Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, the life of Caitanya, told in verse by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. He did so and was deeply impressed by it. During this time he went to Navadvīpa, the renowned centre of the *Vaiṣṇava* culture in Bengal; and he met Siddha Caitanya Bābājī, the head of the leading *Vaiṣṇava* monastery of the place, who by looking at Vijayakṛṣṇa's face said that he saw the *Vaiṣṇava* marks on Vijayakṛṣṇa's forehead. The utterance of the Bābājī was actually fulfilled in Vijayakṛṣṇa's later life. With the permission of Keśava Candra, he began to sing the *Vaiṣṇava* devotional songs (*kīrtana*) in the Samāja, in spite of general opposition.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's Missionary Work at Various Places :

Vijayakṛṣṇa visited many places of East Bengal (now Bangaladesh), viz., Mymensing, Sylhet, Citāgong, Tripurā, etc., though Dacca became the main centre of his missionary activities. As a great *karma-yogin* he worked day and night, preaching, lecturing, visiting many places on foot, ministering to the needy and the ill, and performing many other humanitarian works. There were numerous instances in which he was helped and protected by the invisible hand of God. He also visited many places of the Uttar Pradeśa, Bihar and Punjab on his missionary peregrinations.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's Visionary Dīkṣā under Caitanya :

During this period of his life a mysterious experience, which took place at Calcutta, electrified his entire being and deeply affected his entire future life. It gave his life a definite direction. He felt the personal presence of Mahāprabhu Caitanya and got *dīkṣā* directly from him. After this, he went to Vārānasī where he began to spend most of his time with the great *yogin* Trailaṅga Svāmī who was then observing a vow of silence. A few days afterwards, the Svāmī broke his silence; and taking him to a lonely place gave him *dīkṣā*, though telling him that he would get his final *dīkṣā* from his real *guru*, who would appear at the proper time.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's Thirst for Sadguru; His Dīkṣā, Sādhanā, and Siddhi :

From what has been said above, it is clear that Vijayakṛṣṇa was sincerely desirous of entering into the true spiritual life and that he made all efforts humanly possible in that direction — efforts which consisted of a strict personal observance of spiritual discipline, practice of such methods of *sādhanā* as were available to him at the time, and visits to the wise and the saintly, and to holy places in the hope of securing the entry to high spiritual life. But he found to his great disappointment that he was, in spite of the rich experiences he had undergone, as removed from the true spiritual life as he had been at the beginning. The great importance and the imperative need of a *sadguru* in all genuine spiritual advancement was brought home to his mind in a way which he could no longer ignore.

In 1883, he visited Gayā in the course of his missionary tour. It was at this place that he was brought face to face, in a mysterious manner, with a great *yogin* adept, whom he instantaneously recognised as the real *sadguru* whom he was searching for till that day. This great *yogin* initiated him into the secrets of Divine Life, after leading him through a psychological process associated with the awakening of his dormant *kuṇḍalinī* power. A brief account of his spiritual *sādhanā* after this period is given at a more appropriate place elsewhere in the present work and need not be discussed here. But

it must be noted in passing that under his *guru*'s instructions, Vijayakṛṣṇa, who had already discarded the Brāhminical sacred thread, began to hold it again, after he had undergone a purificatory ceremony and assumed the ochre robes of the wandering mendicant (*sannyāsin*). Both the ceremonies, *brahmacarya* and *sannyāsa,* were duly performed by Vijayakṛṣṇa at Vārānasī under the directions of Hariharānanda Sarasvatī, another great teacher whom Vijayakṛṣṇa was fortunate to meet. Hariharānanda, however, did not allow him to sever all connections with the members of his family, saying that in his case the continuity of such connection would not be detrimental to his real spiritual progress.[2] Vijayakṛṣṇa's hard penances and other *yogic* efforts for the ultimate Self-realisation continued for about two years, till 1885. The last centre of his *sādhanā* was at Geṇḍeriā, Dacca, where, it is believed, he realised his perfection (*siddhi*) about the year 1886.

His Pilgrimage; Vijayakṛṣṇa Again Giving Dīkṣā :

After his *siddhi,* Vijayakṛṣṇa set out on pilgrimage in different parts of the country and met many saints and sages. On his own, he first initiated one Navakumara Bāgcī by chanting into his ears the Holy Name of God instead of a customary *mantra.* Later on, at his *guru*'s behest, he began to initiate people in *yoga* (*yoga-dīkṣā*). His *guru,* who was no other than

2. V.G., pp. 138-140.

the mysterious being who had appeared before him at Gayā and initiated him, used to be present in a form invisible to others during the ceremonies of initiation conducted by Vijayakṛṣṇa. Vijayakṛṣṇa was aware of him, but the others were not.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's Dissociation with Brāhmo Samāja :

In spite of all this Vijayakṛṣṇa continued to be a member of the Brāhmo Samāja. He had been a preacher of the organisation for a long time and was held in high appreciation for his moral excellences. But with his *dīkṣā*, his new method of *sādhanā* and his experiences, his mind began to stir with new ideas, developing in him a strong faith in the wisdom of the ancient *ṛṣis* and in the current of spiritual ideas emanating from them. He accepted image-worship, the sanctity of the holy places (*tīrthas*) and of the gods and goddesses in the Hindu pantheon, the cult of *mantras*, and the mysteries of *yoga*. But all this was obnoxious to the hard-boiled Brāhmo. The upshot of it was that the Samāja began to consider him as one who had fallen down from his previous heights owing to his resumption of the old beliefs and superstitions which he had discarded before. Vijayakṛṣṇa, on the other hand, felt that his personal religion was not just a set of dead dogmas, but a growing faith filled with life and potency. It was not possible for him to disregard the honest convictions which came home to him as a result of deeply felt personal experiences. Under these circumstances,

he thought that a further maintenance of his relations with the Samāja would not be in the best interest either of the Samāja or of himself. He therefore considered it proper to sever all connections, formally and finally, with the Brāhmo Samāja, which he did in the year 1887.

Establishment of Āśrama at Geṇḍeriā; Vijayakṛṣṇa's Life at Puri and His Passing Away :

Thereafter his followers and well-wishers built an *āśrama* for him at Geṇḍeriā, a small village in the suburb of Dacca with a view to enable him to spend the remaining years of his life quietly there. Vijayakṛṣṇa settled down at Geṇḍeriā accordingly. While living there he paid occasional visits to Vṛndāvana, Haradvāra, Allahabad, and to other holy places. It is said that about the beginning of this period he also visited the sacred mountain of Muktināth in Nepal. In 1891, he lost his consort who passed away at Vṛndāvana. Thereafter Vijayakṛṣṇa lived in Calcutta for a few years. From Calcutta he went to Puri. He spent the remaining years of his life at Puri in the famous historical monastery-cum-garden known as Jagannātha Vallabha Maṭha, near Narendra Sarovara, associated with Rāya Rāmānanda of illustrious memory. It was here that in 1899 Vijayakṛṣṇa left his mortal frame.

He left behind him a son and two daughters, two of his other daughters having already predeceased him.

2

Vijayakṛṣṇa as a Mystic :

Vijayakṛṣṇa was born in India at a time when her religious consciousness was passing through a state of fermentation as a result of the impact of the Western, and especially the Christian, religious ideals on the Hindu society; and upon the steady but comparatively silent indigenous revivalistic and reformatory trends into the conventional ideas and outlook. He had a noble heritage in so far as he was lineally connected with the great Advaitācārya, the older contemporary of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Heredity, environment, education, and social relations — all these things produced a wonderful effect upon the personality of this remarkably great man, whose later development clearly showed how deeply imprinted these influences were on his personality.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's Supranormal Experiences in Early Life; Predilections for Mystic Life :

In the early years of his life Vijayakṛṣṇa exhibited, of course in a more or less unconscious manner, certain symptoms which could be taken as a clear augury of the great spiritual awakening in his later life. His nature was supersensitive so far as spiritual experiences were concerned, and it was ever susceptible to anything pious and holy. His visions of the family

deity, Śyāmasundara,[3] and of other celestial forms, from time to time, his supersensuouss audition at Bāblā[4] of the choral devotional songs (*saṁkīrtana*), as if being sung by Caitanya himself and his disciples, and similar other incidents in his boyhood, which took place now and then, were the indications of the fact that his was an extraordinary personality which carried in it great spiritual possibilities. His moral sense and his early devotional predilections led him

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3. An image of Śyāmasundara, a form of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

4. Bāblā is the name of a very small (thinly populated at that time) village in the neighbourhood of Śāntipur, the birthplace of Vijayakṛṣṇa, as well as of his ancestor, the Advaitācārya Prabhu. It is said that the great Advaitācārya Prabhu used to come to this far-off place, away from the busy haunts of men, for the purpose of meditation. It was his most favourite resort. Vijayakṛṣṇa too in his early life, had frequented this place. He himself says that the site of Advaitācārya's meditation had a sanctity of its own and possessed undoubted powers of calling up higher thoughts and associations. After sunset he used to hear with rapt attention the notes that were indescribably sweet. He had little idea from where the notes came. But the notes were unmistakably those coming from an inspired *kīrtana* recital at which many people were taking part. This was, as he explained to a disciple, no ordinary sound, but the sound of the soul-animating *kīrtana* sung by the great Caitanya himself. On the wings of these etherial notes, Vijayakṛṣṇa's mind would wander into the dreamlands of the past. His body shook and fidgeted, so great was the tension of delight produced by this supranormal experience. It will not be out of place to mention here that such notes are audible only to a devotee (*bhakta*) engaged in *nāma-sādhanā* with an absolute steadiness of the mind. S.S., III. pp. 112-113.

to a life of great purity, truthfulness, righteousness and aspiration for Divine Perfection.

Turning Point and Change of Vijayakṛṣṇa's Outlook; Influence of Saintly Persons :

The most important event in Vijayakṛṣṇa's educational career was his avid cultivation of the knowledge of Vedānta. This knowledge, which might not have been quite adequate, was sufficient to inspire him to build in his mind a great spiritual ideal for which his heart and mind had been unconsciously yearning. The study of Vedānta brought home to his devotional yet rationalistic mind, that beyond and behind the appearances of this phenomenal world, there is a Supreme Personality which is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-merciful, just and yet compassionate; that this Personality is unique and above all comparison with the objects of the created world; and that this is what is called *Brahman*. So what Vijayakṛṣṇa thus realised was a monotheistic picture of the Divine, rather than a monistic one; and we shall not be far from the truth if we say that behind this realisation there lay the influence of the Christian conception of Godhead, especially as it prevailed in the Unitarian circles which gained a good deal of prominence in those days at Calcutta. The purely monistic doctrine of *Brahman* as enunciated by Śaṅkarācārya did not naturally appeal to Vijayakṛṣṇa. In this frame of mind, it was only natural that he should look with an eye of aversion both upon the prevalent system of image-

worship in the country and upon several socio-religious features and practices of his own society which he could not regard as rational. The abuses in the social and individual life began to gall his mind very bitterly indeed. In the light of his clear and strong mind, when he looked at the dry and very often meaningless features of the religious and social life, he could not but feel that these needed a prompt weeding out. At this stage his contact with the leaders of the Brāhmo Samāja, especially with the saintly persons like Devendra Nath Tagore, brought about a revolutionary change in his entire outlook.

His formal association with the Brāhmo Samāja was only the precursor of a long period of religious quest and conquest, in which he devoted himself in an integral manner, not only to a systematic and deligent search for the Truth in his own life, but also to the cause of Truth as he understood it. It became his bounden duty to preach to others what he understood as Truth in his own life. His subsequent life was spent in the active role of a ministrant preacher for the cause of the propagation of *Brahmajñāna* and *Brahmabhakti*.

Chief Characteristics of Vijayakṛṣṇa's Spiritual Consciousness :

The chief characteristic of his spiritual consciousness during this period was his growing awareness of the fact that human mind has a natural tendency towards sinful thoughts and of the redeeming Grace of the Supreme Lord. Humility, self-abnegation, surrender,

a life of purity, righteousness, and strenuous altruistic activities—these were the great virtues which he possessed. He was filled with a Divine Consciousness from time to time, which cleansed and mellowed his heart. It gave him both joy and peace. But all those blessings were short-lived; the permanent cure for the dryness of his soul did not come yet. He began to feel that the one thing he needed essentially to secure an inner peace and equipoise was Divine Grace. Human efforts, however well-meaning and sincere, do not count for much in the long run against the hostile forces that breed in us and also surround us. Human efforts (*puruṣakāra*) unaided by Divine Grace is incapable of accomplishing anything in the above direction.

Necessity of Sadguru; Vijayakṛṣṇa's Visionary Dīkṣā under Caitanya :

Occasional dreams and visions[5] of the great saints impressed upon him the absolute necessity of seeking a *guru* or master, without whose active intercession no real progress on the spiritual path was possible. The

5. When Vijayakṛṣṇa was living at 13 Mirzāpur St., Calcutta, once, while meditating in his own room in the dead of night, he must have fallen into a doze; then he was suddenly roused by what seemed to be knocks at the door. The door was opened, and slowly there came into the room Caitanya Mahāprabhu, followed by his two great companions; the flood of light coming from their bodies illumined the entire room. One of the companions was Advaitā-

rationalistic tendencies of the Brāhmo Samāja in general and of his own mind in particular had led him to believe that in approaching God who is omniscient, compassionate, and all-pervading, the mediation of a human *guru* was both irrational and unnecessary. This belief now began to break up little by little until he was convinced that his own unguided efforts in the direction of any true spiritual advancement were worse than useless. He felt the universal presence of the Supreme Being, but it was not possible for him to have a definite personal contact with that Presence and visualise it in his life as an actuality.

Discovery of a Guru by Vijayakṛṣṇa and Initiation under Him :

Vijayakṛṣṇa realised that he could have no abiding peace or felicity of the Divine Union unless and

cārya who was Vijayakṛṣṇa's ancestor. The Ācārya introduced himself telling Vijayakṛṣṇa that he was his ancestor; he also introduced his two companions, Nityānanda Prabhu and Caitanya Mahāprabhu. At his bidding, Vijayakṛṣṇa fell prostrate on the floor before them and then offered them seats. The Ācārya intimated to Vijayakṛṣṇa that the Mahāprabhu would initiate him and asked him to bathe himself. He did as he was instructed and received the spiritual initiation by the incantation of the Divine Name into his ears from the Mahāprabhu himself. Thereafter his normal consciousness disappeared. It must be remembered that this incident was not a mere vision in a dream, because on the subsequent morning Vijayakṛṣṇa was able to ascertain the reality of the incident. The fact was that the three seats (*āsanas*) offered to the three holy men were still lying on the floor, and Vijayakṛṣṇa's wet garments were found left near the well where he had taken his bath.

until his existing personality was transformed. A radical change involved in conversion was absolutely necessary for true spiritual advancement. He undoubtedly felt this but he did not know how the necessary change was to be effected. In this predicament of his life, he had one of his most thrilling experiences. He came into direct contact with an angelic being who appeared before him as a great *yogin*[6] possessed of immense spiritual powers. At that time Vijayakṛṣṇa was at Gayā in the course of his missionary tour. He has described how the *yogin*, who had arrived there with the sole object of initiating him, appeared before him. He had come to initiate Vijayakṛṣṇa into the mysteries of *yoga* and the rapture of Divine Life. The *yogin* belonged to the Mānsarovara area in the trans-Himālayan regions and was endowed with great *yogic* wisdom and power. The above initiation or *yoga-dīkṣā*, through the process of which Vijayakṛṣṇa was made to pass, was not a mere formal ceremony known to the

6. Vijayakṛṣṇa was living at that time in the *āśrama* of Raghuvara Bābājī, on the Ākāśagaṅgā Hill at Gayā. It is stated that he was sitting in a lonely place on the hillock, rapt in thought. A sense of failure in life, due to his inability to find a *sadguru* even after a long and diligent search in various parts of the country (including such far away hinterlands as Tibet, the Himālayas, etc.) took hold upon him completely. The anguish made him fall into a swoon on the spot. On the revival of consciousness, he found himself, to his great bewilderment, lying in the lap of a great *yogin* who was affectionately patting him on his back. S.S., II. pp. 94-95.

world under that name, but represented an intra-organic spiritual process of transformation. It aimed at converting a natural personality into a supra-natural one.

It is well known, as the true *yogin* would always say, that every man possesses within himself a secret fount of spiritual energy lying dormant in him (*kuṇḍalinī*) and waiting for re-awakening under favourable circumstances. The dormant state of this energy synchronises with the life of man bound within the nutshell of his worldly tendencies and activities. All spiritual disciplines are practically useless so far as the real conversion of human personality is concerned, until this energy is roused into action and is made to play its vital part in the process of spiritualisation. It is impossible for a man to become truly spiritual with this energy sleeping within him. The formal ceremonies of initiation usually followed in the different religious faiths have no such spiritual significance, and can lead to precious little unless they are fused with the awakened spiritual power latent in man. The *yogin*, who had come there to initiate Vijayakṛṣṇa, roused his superior power, Vijayakṛṣṇa's *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, and then initiated him. The immediate result of the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī* was the induction of a supranormal current into his body and mind, which proved too strong for his normal consciousness to bear. Consequently, under this tremendous psycho-spiritual impact — the superior spiritual current of the *yogin* was charging the inferior and weaker organs of Vijayakṛṣṇa — the latter was unable to bear the great

inner tension, lost his consciousness, and thereafter lay in a trance-like state for eleven days.[7]

It may be mentioned that a certain period of time was required for the superior spiritual power of the angelic *guru* (*guru-śakti*) to adjust itself in the immature human frame of the disciple. When Vijayakṛṣṇa came back to his own, he was altogether a changed man, having experienced the effect of the true spiritual conversion. The impurities and the countless impediments to spiritual achievements within him were burnt out, as it were, under the action of this divine fire. The new power which began to work in his system did not, however, appear to be anything alien or exotic at all. It was so assimilated into his own spiritual power, which had been roused from its slumber under the impact, that there was no feeling of strain or uneasiness even for a moment. This self-conscious power, spiritual and formative in nature, within Vijayakṛṣṇa, was from that time constantly active, bringing about silently but surely

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7. It is recorded that he lost his outer consciousness immediately after his initiation, when he was sure the great *yogin* was present. But as soon as he came back to his senses, he looked round and could not find the *yogin* any more. A kind of intense residue had by then seized him ; he was unable to open his eyelids properly. He returned to the Bābājī's *āśrama* in that unsteady condition, and sat down on a large slab of stone under the *bilva* tree, near a cave. Soon he was lost in deep meditation, in which state he remained continuously for eleven days and nights. Bābājī, under whose care he was living, closely watched him during this period and did everything for him with great affection. S.S., II. p. 95.

an integral spiritual evolution. No illustration can be better than this of the rationale and *modus operandi* of what goes by the term *guru-śakti*, and Vijayakṛṣṇa's personal experience of its workings must always be an object lessen to all future seekers. It is said that the great saint exhibited before Vijayakṛṣṇa a number of extraordinary *yogic* feats, in order to convince him that what he had done with him was only a normal *yogic* function, and that he ought to have an implicit faith in the *guru* and his power.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's Sādhanā: Nāma-japa, Nādānusandhāna, Prāṇāyāma, Trāṭaka, etc.:

Subsequently, Vijayakṛṣṇa always said that it was for him the great day of regeneration and the point whence the floodgates of infinite spiritual possibilities were opened up before him. The *guru*, after initiation, instructed him on the methods of spiritual practices intended not only to keep alive the fire kindled by him, but also to develop into it the true union with the Divine. Among the practices, the most important one was that of absolute mental concentration upon, and faith in, the silent and regular incantation of the Holy Name, which had been sanctified by the *guru* and made instinct with life. This is what in all Hindu spiritual literature goes by the name of *nāma-sādhanā* or *japa*, and is attended with a process of breath-control which is natural.

The practice of *japa* associated with breathing, on which Vijayakṛṣṇa's angelic *guru* insisted and on

which, later on, Vijayakṛṣṇa himself used to lay stress while instructing his own disciples, had wonderful effects on the mental system of Vijayakṛṣṇa. It is well known — and we have it on the authority of many other saints as well — that the process, when continued for a long time and attempted in a proper way, produces a great change not only in the mind but also on the physical system of the *sādhaka*. Intensity of this practice is said to give rise to a wonderful hypersubtle current of sound which flows through every channel of the body and acts on the circulation of blood.

The so-called *nādānusandhāna,* described at length in works on *Haṭha-yoga,* etc., is an allied practice apparently similar in character, but differing essentially in effect. *Nāda* (lit. a deeply vibrating sound) as such helps in concentration and leads to *samādhi*. But the practice of chanting the Divine Name accompanied by breath-control goes even deeper, inasmuch as it serves as a great aid to the origin and development of *bhakti*. The generation of *bhakti* in a mind otherwise dry is the greatest effect of *nāma-sādhanā*. The Divine Name, when imparted by a qualified master, possesses great potency, and is not to be considered as an empty sound having no spiritual value at all. It is regarded, on the contrary, as a spiritual energy concentrated in a word which serves as the medium of its expression. In the case of Vijayakṛṣṇa, it was his own *guru* who asked him to practise *nāma-sādhanā* in every breath (*svābhāvika*). He began and continued the practice not only at Gayā but also subsequently during his stay at Vindhyācala and Jvālāmukhī.

In the beginning of the practice, a great difficulty was experienced by him; and had it not been for the repeated insistence of the master, who, it seemed, while remaining invisible never actually parted company with him, he would have given up the attempt altogether. With the progress of the *sādhanā* it was felt that the artificial stage was being replaced by a state of naturalness, in which the desired sound was experienced to be issuing forth from below the navel,[8] and then flowing upwards through the next higher centres located in the regions of throat, forehead, and crown of the head. He actually felt that it was a self-conscious spiritual current coursing through the countless nervous tracts in the body. The induction of the current was felt to be spontaneous and attended

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8. The sound originates from *kula-kuṇḍalinī* located at the base of the spine. As soon as the *kuṇḍalinī* is roused into activity, it emits a peculiar sound which grows in intensity and purity as the *kula-kuṇḍalinī* ascends from centre to centre, the sound also rising parallel to it. Thus the ascent of the sound-current is simultaneous with the rise of the serpentine power, the inherent spiritual fire in man. There are certain spiritual centres within the body. These are as good as non-existent, so long as the power, which dominates the centres and is evolved out of its function at these centres, has not become dynamic. But after the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*, the centres tend to become alive and active; and the power, in the course of its ascent, passes through these centres, vitalising each of them and bringing out the different hidden spiritual forces lying at the different centres. The rise of this power to the crown of the head implies a gradual spiritualisation of the entire personality. This is conversion proper, which we come across so often in the literature on mysticism.

by a sensation of intense joy. The continued practice of this *sādhanā*, which became a natural process after a short while, had a quietening effect on the normal course of respiration, quite unlike the artificial and mechanical breath-control (*kumbhaka*) to which the *Haṭha* practices lead. The control of breath implied in this practice, the one pursued by Vijayakṛṣṇa, was of a peculiar character and represented the following stages :

(*a*) Slow inhalation followed by a passage of the vital current to the lowest centre in the spinal column, and its establishment there.

(*b*) Suppression of all the senses, and closing of their avenues.

(*c*) Inhibition of the breathing process.

(*d*) Exclusive mental concentration on the Holy Name.

(*e*) Firm retention of breath.

As a matter of course this controlling process resulted in shutting out all the external stimuli. The consciousness of the outer world disappeared, and the mind became absorbed in the recollection of the ineffable joy, springing from the incantation of the Divine Name, and felt through every centre of the inner consciousness. The exclusion of the outer world, and the obliteration of memory, went a great way towards bringing about the manifestation of divine visions and voices.

It may be noted in passing that the chief *sādhanā* on the track of which Vijayakṛṣṇa had been put by

his angelic *guru*, was that of *nāma-japa*. The breath-control, which followed as a necessary corollary to this practice, though very useful to it, was only ancillary. It is said that Vijayakṛṣṇa was also asked to practise gazing, (*trāṭaka*) along with the above-mentioned practices. The result of these practices began to manifest itself in due course in the form of a sublimated consciousness, which could be called neither awake nor asleep. It was a state of an intense clarity and purity of the consciousness, rendered free from all conceptual elements. On account of its deep tranquillity and luminousness, the pellucid and purified consciousness was to be distinguished from all the known states of normal consciousness of man. We have it on record that in this great *yogic* practice, the entire physical system, including every corpuscle of the blood, is regenerated and revitalised. Vijayakṛṣṇa said in his later life that in this condition the seeker must remain very careful and must keep his body always covered with a sheet or smeared with ashes, lest the deep regenerative process going on inside should be disturbed with fatal consequences for the practitioner. The attainment of perfection in this practice is represented by the spontaneous activity of every sense organ and every part of the body, from which the sound of the Name issues forth at every moment. But this attainment must be preceded by a complete victory over the hostile forces like attachment, greed, and temptation, to name only a few of these forces. The attainment of glory in this *sādhanā*, by reducing all these forces to nothing, mends the body in its own way and orchestrates it to its achieved harmony.

During the days of *nāma-sādhanā*, Vijayakṛṣṇa passed through a stage of darkness and despair in which his heart seemed to have dried up altogether; and a sense of fruitlessness and disappointment began to oppress his mind. The body and mind were in the grip of heat and tension, under the powerful regenerative process of the *sādhanā*; also there was the awareness of his own unworthiness and incompetence in respect to the regenerative process at work. The result was that he even gave up his *sādhanā* for a while. It is said that in the midst of this dark period of his life, he had the good fortune of occasional visits from his master who cheered him up and assured him of final success, urging upon him, at the same time, the necessity of an unbroken continuity of the *sādhanā*, in spite of its apparent aridness and depressing character.

Vijayakṛṣṇa continued this course of *sādhanā* for six months, during which he lived successively at Gayā (Ākāśagaṅgā Hills), in the Barābara Hills, and subsequently at Vindhyācala.[9] It has already been observed

9. S.S., I. p. 70. B.C. Das says that Vijayakṛṣṇa was asked by his *guru* to study *Haṭha-yoga-pradīpikā* and *Vicāra-sāgara*, which he did during his stay (Das, B.C. : *Life of Vijayakrishna*, p. 141). This appears to be in conflict with the statement made in 1891 by Vijayakṛṣṇa himself to Brahmacārin Kuladānanda, in which he said that the above request was made by his *guru* when Vijayakṛṣṇa was at Dārbhaṅgā and not at Jvālāmukhī. He visited Dārbhāṅga in May-June 1887, whereas his stay at Jvālāmukhī was during the middle of 1884.

in the previous section that Vijayakṛṣṇa assumed the garb of a *sannyāsin* at Vārānasī at the instance of his *guru*, shortly after his initiation at Gayā.

Heat in Vijayakṛṣṇa's Body during His Nāma-sādhanā :

While he was practising *nāma-sādhanā* at Vindhyācala, he began to feel the burning sensation of heat in his body. With the intensity of *sādhanā*, this heat intensified and became unbearable. In order to keep his body comparatively cool, he used to smear it with mud. It is said that once the heat was so great that this superficial method of cooling did not avail, and he was in such sore pain that he thought of even ending his life by jumping into a pool (*kuṇḍa*) full of water. No sooner had he jumped into it than a *sannyāsin*, who was evidently standing by and was watching the incident, came to him and rescued him. This *sannyāsin* told him that the water of the pool had the mysterious power of petrification and turning dark hair into grey. Vijayakṛṣṇa himself said that the *sannyāsin* thereafter applied the juice of a particular leaf to his hair, as a result of which it was restored to its original colour. Immediately afterwards, the *yogin*, his *guru*, appeared before him and said that the heat, however intense and unbearable it might appear to Vijayakṛṣṇa at that time, was expected to become even more intense in the future. He therefore advised him to proceed at once to Jvālāmukhī, in the Kaṅgrā

Valley, now a part of Himācala Pradeśa.[10] Vijayakṛṣṇa acted upon his advice and left for Jvālāmukhī. Just as he was told, the heat increased to an unbearable degree during his continued *sādhanā* at Jvālāmukhī. But once the peak was reached, it gradually abated.

The Fire of Name (*Nāmāgni*) :

The burning sensation, described above as resulting from the inner spiritual upheaval caused by the exclusive concentration upon the utterance of the Divine Name, is usually known among the mystics of this path as the flame emanating from the Divine Name (*nāmāgni*). The function of the flame is to effect a purgation or rather destruction of all that

10. Jvālāmukhī is a great centre of spiritual culture and enjoys, from times immemorial, the reputation of being one of the fifty-one *śakti-pīṭhas*, scattered all over India and sanctified by their association with Mahādeva's consort, Sati. It is believed that this was the place where the tongue (*jihvā*) of Sati dropped when in grief and anger Mahādeva danced in a frenzied manner with the dead body of his beloved consort who immolated herself because her father insulted Mahādeva. It was once the main centre of activity of the early Buddhists and also of the *yogic* cults of the *Nāthas*. It is not known why the master so definitely emphasised the importance of this place in the spiritual development of Vijayakṛṣṇa. Yet that his emphasis was significant is evident from the fact that this holy place exercised a beneficial influence on his mind, and helped him in a great measure to attain peace and equipoise for which he was so long seeking.

is impure in man in order to enable him to rise to the fullest stature of his inner moral and spiritual being, and receive the blessings of the new waves of spiritual light coming in the wake of re-animation and progressive ascent of the *kuṇḍalinī* within him. In the past, when life was less complex and man enjoyed robust health, a more drastic method of purification of body was followed. One of these methods was the so-called *tuṣānala*, which became famous since the episode of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa. In the present age, however, the substitute for *tuṣānala* as a purifying agent for the body is the fire generated by the Divine Name. The effect of this fire-ordeal is the purification of the body. It is said that when the Name continues to flow at every breath, the burning sensation begins to manifest itself. The continued utterance of the Name serves to intensify this sensation so much that it appears as if every atom and molecule of the body is burning up under this heat. Being hardly able to bear it, the *sādhaka* fidgets from place to place, like a man in the grip of deep agony in search of relief. At this time, the best course is to carry on the utterance of the Name with re-doubled concentration, and not to give it up in any case. Discontinuance of the utterance, in order to escape the effects of the fire is risky and even unfavourable to one's life. When, however, the intensity of the heat has subsided, a wonderful freshness and a soothing quiet follow, never to forsake the *yogin* thereafter.[11]

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11. S.S., II. pp. 243-244.

Other Psycho-Physical Effects of Nāma-sādhanā :

The experience of burning heat is not the only accompaniment of the *sādhanā*. When success in the initial stage of the *sādhanā* is accomplished, *i.e.*, when the flow of Name becomes a spontaneous process like normal respiration, and constantly echoes and re-echoes in every nerve and artery of the body, the *sādhaka* realises a natural and constant circulation of the Name along all the intra-organic channels. In consequence of continued *nāma-sādhanā*, there is also perceptible an increased tendency of physical withdrawal of the various parts and organs of the body. Hands, legs, ears, eyes, nose, etc., are irresistibly drawn within, just as it is the case with the turtle withdrawing all its legs within the shell. The withdrawal of the *sādhaka*'s limbs and organs may also be like what we observe in a jellyfish. Or it may assume a still different character. The *sādhaka*, however, stands the risk of a disaster if he allows the pain to gain the upper hand. Whatever may happen to him, the concentration of the *sādhaka* on the ceaseless repetition of the Holy Name must continue, nay, the greater the physical torment, the greater should be the concentration. The *sādhaka* must be on his guard and must be prepared for all eventualities. He must also have a prior knowledge that such torments may be of diverse types. In many such cases, not only in the limbs but in the bones and the marrow and in all the joints of arms, legs, and knees, a strange and distressing looseness may be felt; the arms and legs may become elongated. In extreme

cases, these and even the head may be rent asunder from the trunk for a while, and then the separated parts may refit themselves at the proper places in the physical organism. We have it on Vijayakṛṣṇa's own authority that during his *sādhanā* he had a personal experience of all these harrowing ordeals; but his determination and concentration never slackened.[12] This experience of Vijayakṛṣṇa reminds us of similar experiences in the life of Caitanya Mahāprabhu[13] and also in the life of his junior contemporary, Prabhu Jagadbandhu.[14] Evidently these physical changes were known to Vijayakṛṣṇa through experience in his own life, and it is also probable that he had observed these effects in the body of his *guru*. There is no doubt that the practice of a concentrated recitation of the Holy Name produces a definite and lasting effect, not only on the circulation of blood, but also on every particle of matter of which our frame is composed.[15]

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12. S.S., III. p. 243. Vijayakṛṣṇa's statement runs : '*esab śudhu kathā naya, nije dekhechi*', which means 'these are not mere words, but matters of personal observation'.

13. C.C., *Anta-līlā*. Chapters IV and XVII.

14. M.M., p. 64; H.K., pp. 13-14.

15. When the *nāma-sādhanā* affects even the tiniest of the tissues and genes of the body, the bones, etc., also do not remain impervious to the effect. It is said of Manṣūr Hallāj, a Persian *Ṣūfī* of the Tenth Century A.D., that he proclaimed from his own personal realisation that every drop of his blood bore upon it, as it were, the words *An-al-Haq*, meaning 'I am the Truth' (*so'ham*).

Vijayakṛṣṇa says that he was an eyewitness to the wonderful phenomenon concerning the extent to which *nāma-sādhanā* produces its effect on the body of a man. He actually saw with his own eyes a piece of bone lying on the bank of the Yamunā at Vṛndāvana on which the words '*Hare Kṛṣṇa*', God's Name, were inscribed in the Nāgarī script. Evidently it was the result found on the bone of a spiritually perfect *Vaiṣṇava* (*siddha vaiṣṇava*).[16] Steadiness in this practice helped to generate a circular mark on the back of all Vijayakṛṣṇa's fingers in each hand.[17] The mark looked like a curved symbol bearing a close resemblance to the graphic representation of *oṁkāra*.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's Early Realisation at Dacca :

The next climacteric point in Vijayakṛṣṇa's life was his realisation (*siddhi*) which took place at Dacca about the year 1885 or 1886. At the time when the great realisation occurred, he was living in the suburb of the town, known as Geṇḍeriā. The place was full of wild bushy growth in those days, and was a favourite resort of some of the well-known Muslim mendicants (*faqīrs*) of the neighbourhood. Vijayakṛṣṇa was at that time residing in town, occupying the house intended for the accommodation of the preachers (*pracāra-nivāsa*) of the Brāhmo Samāja. He used to visit Geṇḍeriā regularly every day and stay

16. S.S., III. pp. 18-19.
17. S.S., III. p. 18.

there for hours, absorbed in meditation on the Divine. The loneliness of the place, together with its great sanctity, had a great charm for him. It is said that during these days of strenuous self-discipline and spiritual introspection, he had his seat under a banyan tree.[18] So far as the account of this period is known, it is more than likely that he did not arrange for any special seat (*āsana*) for his use, except what had been originally prescribed by his *guru*.

It was a period of great trials and temptations in the history of Vijayakṛṣṇa's spiritual life. The visitations of the occult and supernormal hostile forces were sources of constant anxiety and uneasiness to him. The legends of Satan and of Māra, associated with the lives of Christ and the Buddha respectively, seemed to have been repeated with certain modifications in his case. In his grim struggle with the dark forces of evil and temptation, Vijayakṛṣṇa used to get substantial help, suggestions, advice, and also guidance from a pious elderly woman (*sādhikā*) living nearby. We have quite insufficient data regarding this bearer of succour, otherwise

18. In other accounts it is mentioned that he sat under a mango tree. It was under this tree that he pursued a course of spiritual discipline aimed at obtaining power over gods (*devatā-siddhi*). For two or three hours everyday he was deeply engaged in the realisation of this objective. Evidently it was not his normal *sādhanā*, but a strenuous psycho-spiritual exercise, for which he had a penchant within him, and for which his *guru* gave him the necessary guidance, evidently to satisfy the disciple's eager thirst for it. (see *Mandira* II. No. 5. p. 199).

we could have obtained a more clear picture of the most crucial period in Vijayakṛṣṇa's formative life.[19]

Vijayakṛṣṇa's Progressive Realisation of Divine Glory :

Before passing on to the next stage of Vijayakṛṣṇa's life, it is quite fitting and enlightening to examine and explain in a brief but clear manner the nature of Vijayakrsna's realisation. He himself said that in his spiritual career he experienced the successive spiritual stages to which reference has been made in the *Bhāgavata,* and on which the renowned early Vaiṣṇava seers of Bengal like Jīva Gosvāmin and Rūpa Gosvāmin had laid so much stress, viz., knowledge of *Brahman*, realisation of *Paramātman*, and loving devotion to *Bhagavān* : *brahmeti paramātmeti bhagavāniti śabdyate*. Assuming that his life in the Brāhmo Samāja represented the first phase of *Brahmajñāna,* as he himself stated on so many occasions, the next stage which found its fulfilment at Geṇḍeriā, Dacca, was undoubtedly that of the realisation of *Paramātman* in *Yoga*. The mind of the seeker, as we

19. All that is known about this aid-giver may be summed up as follows. She was known as Yoginī Mā. She was also a devotee and a confirmed practitioner of the spiritual discipline with the aim of enlightenment, a *sādhikā*. But she had no fixed seat of her own. When Vijayakṛṣṇa was practising under a tree in the garden of one Ānanda Master, she was living nearby. She used to change her seat (*āsana*) from under one tree to another (S.S., III. p. 66).

know, which is fully saturated with *Brahmajñāna,* emerges in its crystal-clear purity, free from all admixture of the material elements. The purified mind in this condition finds its entrance into the heart, and enjoys a state of perfect illumination, as a result of which the glorious vision of *Paramātman,* as the Supreme Light and as the sole director of man's movements as well as of the cosmic system, dawns on the soul. The *Paramātman* is the Supreme Power conceived as the Individual Divine, dwelling in the heart (*antaryāmin*) behind all the activities of the body; it is at the same time the Cosmic Divine, dwelling in the heart of the universe and guiding its multitudinous activities. He is the innermost soul (*antarātman*) within the human-body on the one hand, and the immanent soul imbued in the universe-body on the other. The culture of *Yoga* which Vijayakṛṣṇa was practising was intended to place him in direct union with the *antarātman*; and there is no doubt that his realisation at Genḍeriā was the fulfilment of his *Yoga-sādhanā,* expressed in the form of a vision of *Paramātman.*[20]

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20. The date of Vijayakṛṣṇa's Self-realisation (*siddhi*) is not exactly known, but according to one authority, it took place at Dacca (Genḍeriā), *i.e.,* during the period when Vijayakṛṣṇa was staying there. From a critical sifting and investigation of the records available concerning the period, we feel it is likely that the great moment came shortly after Vijayakṛṣṇa's return to Dacca from Jvālāmukhī. The approximate date will, therefore, fall sometime about 1885 or 1886. Vijayakṛṣṇa's subsequent visit to Dārbhāṅgā in 1887, along with his particular spiritual experiences there, should not be, however, confused with his

The state of realisation which Vijayakṛṣṇa attained at Dacca was, no doubt an exalted spiritual condition, but for a confirmed and devoted pursuer of the divine path, it certainly did not represent the highest perfection. Vijayakṛṣṇa had passed through the stages of *Brahmajñāna* and *Yoga,* yet he was no further than the threshold of the true Divine Plane, to which the path of devotion (*bhakti*) alone could give him access. In this context, Vijayakṛṣṇa's *siddhi* at Dacca might be regarded as a prelude to the highest spiritual ascent. Vijayakṛṣṇa had been a *bhakta,* a sincere devotee all his life, but the type of *bhakti* which follows liberation (*mukti*), was not yet familiar to him. An interesting parallel may be found in *Ṣūfism*, in which the state of *fanā,* the final state of ecstasy and ultimately of annihilation of ego in the individual seeker's life, is followed by the Divine state of *baqā*. In the same way, in the light of the *Vaiṣṇava* metaphysics,

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attainment of Self-realisation (*siddhi*). This spiritual goal of his life, it is almost certain, he had already reached—in all probability at Genḍeriā, Dacca. When Vijayakṛṣṇa was asked by his *guru* to look into his heart and realise the progress he had attained, and this had taken place earlier at Jvālāmukhī, he compared his own realisation with the spiritual stages described in the two books, viz., *Haṭha-yoga-pradīpikā* and *Vicāra-sāgara,* and was surprised to find that all the above stages had already been the objects of his personal experiences. The fourth stage mentioned in the above *Haṭha-yoga* works, viz., a state of complete spiritual resolution (*niṣpatti avasthā*) can justifiably be taken as identical with Self-realisation (*siddhi*). The Dārbhāṅgā incident, therefore, is an indirect confirmation of Vijayakṛṣṇa's having already attained Self-realisation (*siddhi*). Cf. Maitra, Jagabandhu : *Prabhupāda Vijayakṛṣṇa*, pp. 149-153.

true *bhakti* in which God reveals Himself as a Personal Incarnate Being follows as a sequel to *Jñāna* and *Yoga*, and hence is the *summum bonum* of a great *yogin*'s life. The culture of Love and Devotion, therefore, represents the highest spiritual development.

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Vijayakṛṣṇa's Sādhanā; Its Antiquity :

The path which Vijayakṛṣṇa found from the great *Paramahaṁsa*, his *guru* at Gayā, was not merely a *yogic* path but represented something much higher than *yoga*.[21] It was an ancient Vedic *sādhanā*—one which was cultivated by the *ṛṣis* in the earlier times. The scriptures say that Mahādeva, Dattātreya and other *yogins* pursued this great integral path of attaining Perfection and thereby attained *siddhi*.[22] Brahmā also, it is said, went through this *sādhanā* after his first appearance from the navel of Viṣṇu. A voice from the Supreme Void came to him : 'do penances' (*tapa*), whereupon he exerted himself to have a direct vision of the Reality. It is needless to say that this *tapas* was exclusively an inner activity.[23]

It is thus clear that neither Mahādeva nor Brahmā nor, for that matter, any ancient *ṛṣi* was the originator of this *sādhanā* which is beyond the limits of any

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21. S.S., IV. p. 89.
22. S.S., II. p. 98 ; V. p. 197.
23. S.S., IV. p. 89.

historicity. Nor is it concerned in any way with the external manifestations and formalities to which the created beings are subject. The *sādhanā* does not require anybody to give up his present state of life. It can be practised by all, irrespective of the sect or station to which they may belong.[24] On the other hand, it insists, so far as the external aspects of life are concerned, on the continued maintenance of allegiance on the part of the practitioner to the particular social order to which he may belong. It respects the customs of the country, of the society, and of the family of the *sādhaka*, and does not seek to impose any artificial restraint on the normal relation between the *sādhaka* and the milieu in which he has been placed in his life.[25]

It is thus clear that this is the true natural *sādhanā*, the one which each individual must go through at the proper time. His fitness for the *sādhanā* will depend upon his accomplishment of the preliminary self-preparation. But nothing can be truer than this that, even without his asking for it, the *sādhanā* will make it imperative for him to undertake it.[26]

This *sādhanā* does not aim at the spiritual elevation conducive only to the attainment by a lower-order being of the high position of any particular god (*devatā*) in the cosmological hieararchy. It aims, higher than that, at the realisation of the Supreme

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24. S.S., I. p. 8.
25. S.S., IV. p. 211.
26. S.S., V. pp. 89, 170.

Divinity. The celestial beings (*devatā*), though not sought for, do appear before the *yogin*, in due time, and help him in his spiritual evolution.[27] The *sādhanā* does not comprise merely the muttering of the Holy Name (*japa*), for no conscious effort is needed for this purpose. On the other hand, after initiation in this path, true *japa* becomes a spontaneous activity of the system and does not require any effort on the part of the *sādhaka*. What is held to be more important is the performance of one's duties with calmness and fortitude. To be patient under all circumstances is the greatest necessity along this path, in which there is no room for the play of imagination or any other mental faculties. Similariy, meditation on a fixed mental form as an aid to contemplation is not required in this path of *sādhanā*. Different divine forms reveal themselves automatically to the *sādhaka*, but only when his mind has been sufficiently purified to be benefited by these revelations. If a form is at all needed for meditation and concentration, that of the *guru* is the best.[28]

In the ancient days this *sādhanā* was kept away from the householders, evidently because its discipline was supposed to be beyond their capacity. The credit of bringing it down to the doors of all is due to Vijayakṛṣṇa who, under the inspiration of his *guru* and with a view to removing the spiritual bankruptcy of the world, made it accessible to the house-

27. S.S., II. pp. 111-112.
28. S.S., III. p. 32; IV. pp. 196-197.

holders and to the men and women of all ranks and stations.[29]

4

Vijayakṛṣṇa on the Place of Sadguru in Spiritual Life :

Vijayakṛṣṇa was very emphatic on the importance of the *guru* or master in one's spiritual life. His views on this question were all based upon personal experience. He said that his own experience had taught him that it was impossible to develop a true spiritual consciousness without the advice and guidance of a *guru*. As in ordinary affairs, so in the pursuit of the highest spiritual achievements also, one felt the absolute necessity of guidance. Nobody can dispute the truth that all guidance comes from above and that no man as such, however qualified he may be, is competent enough to take the place of the Divine Being who alone may be described as the true guide of all humanity. Yet it is undeniable that the human medium is the best — better even than the celestial beings or the disembodied saints — for the purpose of communicating and transmitting the Divine Wisdom. It is this realisation which inspires the oft-repeated advice that the *guru* must be a man in whom Divine Power and Knowledge are reflected and who is capable of making the transmission fruitful and fully successful. When the occasion comes, the *guru* even

29. S.S., IV. p. 20.

becomes the centre and disseminator of the Divine Power[30].

In view of the fact that God is the Universal *Guru* and that His omnipotence pervades the universe, it stands to reason that a man should try to look upon the human *guru* through whom the Divine Power works, as a substitute for, nay a representive of, God Himself. Implicit obedience to the *guru* and submission to his will are, therefore, strictly enjoined. It is also for this reason that it is said that the disciple should never cavil at his *guru* or should allow his intellect to interfere in the acceptance of the *guru*'s commands. An act of independent or self-assertive judgment or criticism is strictly forbidden.

Relation between Guru and His Disciple :

The relation between *guru* and his disciple is a very intimate one; it is more intimate than that of the expectant mother and the child within her womb. Vijayakṛṣṇa's observation on this point is illuminating. He says that just as the nutrition of the unborn child depends on that of the mother, in the same way, the spiritual advancement of the disciple depends on that of the *guru*. All the acquisitions of the *guru* form an integral part of the disciple's heritage. Even when the disciple attains *siddhi*, he cannot afford to remain indifferent to the affectionate vigilance of his *guru*.[31]

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30. S.S., III. p. 155.
31. A.U., p. 115.

The Sadguru's Sheltering Role :

Who is a *sadguru*, *i.e.*, the truest and best teacher? A *sadguru* is like an expert physician who dispenses wisdom and power to the disciples who have taken refuge in him according to their individual requirements. The main function of the *sadguru* is to facilitate and quicken the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* in the disciples, without which the erroneous notion concerning the independent nature of the soul, as distinct from the body, cannot be removed. Those who are fortunate in this respect do not have to exert themselves for this awakening. They have only to keep the fire alive by a regulated life of strict discipline accompanied by certain daily practices. But the ordinary persons, deprived of the guidance of a *guru*, have to make their own efforts for this awakening. But in majority of such cases, these attempts, halting, timorous, and inadequate as they are, end in failure. No spiritualisation and transformation of one's character is possible without this awakening. The individual *sādhaka* can make progress, if at all he does, only by an activisation of the *kuṇḍalinī*, and not otherwise. Even after the *dīkṣā*, which is only the threshold of a life of illumination, the necessity of the *sadguru*'s guidance continues. It is a fact that the *sadguru*'s God-inspired ministration goes on until the disciple's conversion has been totally effected.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's teachings never fail to stress the fact that the power of the *sadguru* in ameliorating the spiritual state of the disciple is indispensable and

that it works unceasingly even though the disciple may not be aware of it. The relationship existing between the *sadguru* and his disciple is not a mental or physical bond but a spiritual nexus which links one soul with another. The bond can never be snapped although it may remain suppressed for a time. This relation is clearly discernible to a disciple whose heart is filled with the spirit of complete surrender to the *sadguru* and who acts implicitly upon his instructions.[32] It is to be remembered that the true *guru* is not merely the bodily form which is visible to us, but is also represented by the words of instruction which emanate from him for the guidance of the disciple.[33]

Faith in Guru :

The disciple's absolute faith in the *guru* is an essential prerequisite for the former's progress in the spiritual life. The faith cannot be had easily; it is a very rare virtue which does not develop until the egoistic tendencies of the mind are completely removed. Once it is developed, faith can work miracles.[34] Similarly, the disciple can always bank upon his *guru*, even when the latter may not be physically present. The invisible help of the *guru* will certainly be forthcoming if the *sādhaka* exerts himself sincerely and

32. S.S., III. pp. 181-182; IV. p. 38.
33. S.S., IV. pp. 40-41.
34. S.S., IV. pp. 40-41.

earnestly to the best of his abilities, but how can the disciple demonstrate his earnestness, unless it were by the twin spirits of faith and obedience ? Obedience to the *guru* is always an antecedent to the descent of His Grace.

It is well known that almost every moment in a man's life gives rise to fresh *karma*. This is true only till a close relation with the *guru-śakti* is established. The fact is that as soon as a man surrenders everything to a competent *guru,* he ceases to generate new *karma,* but only reaps the consequences of the past *karmas*. And even these are not experienced in full, because the *guru* bears upon himself the burden (*karma-phala*) of most of them. His sufferings thus become the vicarious suffering of the *guru.* Besides, even if a man had led a sinful life before his association with a *sadguru*, there would undoubtedly be no involvement in such acts *after* his association with the *guru*. A sense of aloofness would arise enabling him to stand mentally apart from all his actions, as if he were an unconcerned onlooker. And even when he realised the sinfulness of an act, there would spontaneously appear in him an unconscious effort to refrain from the act in the future. It would be as if the *prārabdha karma* of the past life actuated him in the manner described above.[35]

Refuge in the *sadguru ipso facto* leads to *mokṣa.* Vijayakṛṣṇa himself has said that if once refuge is taken, a man is not required to go beyond three

35. S.S., III. p. 17.

successive lives to realise his perfection. But for one who has an implicit faith in the *guru*, or even if he has no such faith, if he only takes particular care to carry out the *guru*'s instructions, in spite of rising doubts, he will surely achieve liberation in the course of one life only. The *sadguru* who is an incarnation of God Himself, is always present with the disciple, showering his blessings and benedictions on the disciple in various ways, though without assuming a mortal human form. His unfailing grace shows itself through the various objects of creation which contribute to the benefit and well-being of the disciple, viz., the trees, the plants, the creepers, the human beings and so forth.

The Advent of Sadguru :

The *sadguru*, by his divine nature, comes very rarely, so that it is only at rare fortuitous moments that one is able to find access to him. But whenever he comes, it is with the sole object of doing good to the disciples. As an example, we may refer to Guru Nānak, who came to this world, in his latest advent here, after a lapse of four aeons (*kalpas*). The relation, therefore, between the *sadguru* and his disciple is not physical or worldly, but spiritual. An important characteristic of the *sadguru* is that he never tests a disciple or makes the latter pass through an ordeal, if the reliance of the disciple on the *sadguru* is full and final. He shows the disciple the right path and leads him on. But those pseudo-disciples

who do not unhesitatingly accept his teachings but prefer to pick and choose according to their own light, are put to very severe tests, the purpose behind the tests being to correct and purify them and to relieve them of the tyranny of the ego. Such purification leads to the development of faith and obedience.[36]

Faith in the *guru,* as already noted, is a noble virtue, and hence is very rarely found. The achievement of this faith marks the fulfilment of a man's life. It does not originate from a perception of the superior powers which the *guru* demonstrates, for even the astonishing spiritual phenomena which saints may exhibit through their extraordinary powers, instead of inducing a real faith in the inferior beings, may usually be misinterpreted by them as acts of magic. Faith is far above the cheap plaudits of the vulgar. Faith is the mature fruit of a high degree of spiritual development, and this development is dependent upon the consistent and devoted practice of the *guru*'s instructions.[37] These instructions are conveyed through words, but words wrought with a wonderful potency. People who have previous *sādhanās* to their credit have no misgivings as to the truthfulness of these words, but the ordinary people are certainly required to act up to these instructions in order to be convinced of their power and worth.[38]

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36. S.S., II. pp. 39-40.
37. S.S., V. pp. 101-102.
38. S.S., V. p. 103.

This absolute faith marks the attainment of the best and the wisest in *dharma*. But it also follows that such faith is very rare, because it is the outcome of a complete surrender, the most daring deed in life, and it flows in a slow natural course from an implicit obedience of the disciple to the *guru*'s requests. Is there no royal road to this faith? If there were, it could not be anything else but a dedicated *sādhanā* in which the devotee dedicates himself completely to a constant reiteration of the Divine Name, nay, when his entire being chants the Lord's Name.[39]

God is universal and omnipresent and yet people find no access to Him. This is simply because of the fact that His special power or majesty is not manifested anywhere in particular. The highest power of God is called *cit-śakti* of which, however, the *sadguru* is the embodiment. Consequently, if the longing were for a godly vision, the vision of God could be had in the *sadguru* through whom the Divine Power (*cit-śakti*) is solely and specially revealed for the benefit of the commonalty. As a matter of fact, however, as has been said above, God expresses Himself through the *sadguru*, so that meditation on the *sadguru* amounts to meditation on God.[40]

The question arises: how can a person follow in the footsteps of the *guru*, who is far superior to him? It is difficult to explain how it is done. But about this there is no doubt, that through constant obedience

39. S.S., IV. p. 171.
40. S.S., III. p. 29.

to (or even endeavour for obedience to) the *sadguru's* instructions, even a cripple can scale a peak: *paṅguṁ laṅghayate girim*. Obedience as described above implies and demands a complete self-surrender.

Human nature being diverse, what is a regular and suitable path for one may not suit the nature and abilities of all others. In some cases, for instance, the physical proximity of the disciple to the person of the *guru* proves harmful, as it helps to strengthen the doubts in the mind of the former. In other cases, however, such nearness to the *guru* is really a great boon and blessing.[41]

There can be no return, in the proper sense of the term, of the *guru's* gifts to the disciple, simply because such gifts are above our laws of exchange. The gifts can certainly not be paid back by remuneration (*dakṣinā*); on the other hand, the gifts are the showers of grace from a godly being to the poor and weak mortals of the world. In such a circumstance any talk of making returns will be stupidity, nay almost blasphemy.[42]

The relation between the *sadguru* and his disciple is very sacred. If ever the *guru* begins to look down upon his disciple, he brings about his own fall — he is himself deserted by God. Hence God reveals Himself only when the *guru* and the disciple cry out in one voice for His mercy, in a spirit of mutual co-operation. It is at such a moment that the Divine

41. S.S., III. p. 46.
42. S.S., III. p. 186.

Rāsa-līlā[43] manifests itself, in which the disciple sees his *guru* on the left of Lord *Kṛṣṇa*, while the *guru*, on his part, sees his disciple in the same position.[44]

People possessing different degrees of spiritual qualifications are sure to reach the same spiritual goal provided they are initiated by the *sadguru*. It is just like the train carrying different people, seated in different classes and enjoying different amenities, to the same destination. It matters little whether these people lie awake or asleep, or whether they quarrel among themselves — all of them will certainly reach the destination for which they are booked.[45]

An interesting but very justifiable sidelight on the above discourse is that, according to Vijayakṛṣṇa, the function of a *sadguru* cannot be exercised by a woman, even if she has attained perfection (*brahmavidyā*). For certain reasons, her body is not capable of acting as a proper medium; and it is for this reason that even a woman of the highest order of Brāhmin is not entitled to bear upon her body the sacred thread.[46]

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43. In *Vaiṣṇava* philosophy the word denotes the highest conception of the Ultimate Reality, realised through the devotee's most purified and intense love. The conception expresses itself through the picture of an eternal communion between perfect love and perfect beauty, symbolised by *Rādhā* and *Kṛṣṇa* engaged in Divine Sport, on the highest level of the transcendental plane.

44. S.S., III. p. 193.

45. S.S., III. p 215.

46. S.S., III. p. 256; IV. p. 171.

In Vijayakṛṣṇa's teachings there are references to the *kula-guru* too. The word *kula-guru,* according to him, does not mean a hereditary family *guru,* as is generally believed, but a *guru* whose *kula-kuṇḍalinī* has already been roused into vigorous activity. The fact is, as Vijayakṛṣṇa points out, that though most of the so-called *kula-gurus* today are unworthy of the name, it is a fact that in each case one of the ancestors was a man of profound spiritual realisations (*siddha*).[47]

The *guru* has to suffer vicariously for the sins of the disciple. This cannot but be a very responsible and difficult function. It is said that once Vijayakṛṣṇa himself was lashed by the supranormal agencies for the sin of one of his disciples.[48]

Guru Essentially Divine Consciousness and Identical with Brahman :

The essence of the *guru* is pure Divine Consciousness, that distinction which makes him stand apart from the rest. His eternal body, which is the seat of the Divine Consciousness in him, lies beyond the ken of ordinary men; but, all the same, it lies behind his visible appearance, and is exactly similar in character. The visible body, composed of the dense physical matter, is only a shadow of the eternal luminous body. Yet the shadow cannot be rejected, because it is

47. S.S., III. pp. 254-255.
48. S.S., IV. pp. 46-48.

through the shadow that a poor mortal, the disciple, can possibly reach the substance.[49]

The reference to the *guru* as found in the *Vedic* literature, including *Upaniṣads* and *Smṛtis,* has bearing only upon the *ācārya-guru*, and is a closed preserve of the *Brāhmins*. But the question of the *guru* who imparts *mantras*, *i.e.*, the *guru* as the awakener and activiser of the esoteric spiritual wisdom latent in man, is discussed in the *Tantras*, as well as in *Sanatakumāra-saṁhitā*, *Gautama-saṁhitā*, *Nārada Pāñcarātra*, etc.[50]

There are no external marks or features (*lakṣaṇas*) by which a *sadguru* can be distinguished or identified. One's success in finding or recognising a *sadguru* is possible only through the Divine Grace at the proper time, and as a fruit of a ceaseless pursuit of the spiritual life. Once the blessed moment comes, one gets the illumination from the *sadguru*, no matter what extraneous circumstances prevail at the time.[51]

An absolute identity exists between the *guru* and *Brahman*. The seat allotted to the *guru* in the disciple's body is in the head. The crown of the head (*brahmatālu*) is the throne of the *guru* in the human body. For meditating in the crown of the head, Vijayakṛṣṇa recommended the divine form of *Śiva* as the incarnation of the *guru*.[52]

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49. S.S., IV. pp. 94-95.
50. S.S., IV. p. 176..
51. S.S., IV. p. 171.
52. S.S., V. p. 116.

Continued and concentrated practising of the Holy Name, and making it as natural and constant as breath, go to produce a state of mind in which the vision of the *guru* — as well as the luminous form latent in the Holy Name and incarnated in the *guru* — unfolds itself before the disciple. With the dawning of this state upon the disciple, *guru* and *Brahman* become merged in one. It follows thus that only with reference to the aforesaid condition and vision may the *guru* be described as identical with *Brahman*.[53]

Nobody is entitled to a divine vision until he has been initiated by a living *sadguru*. Jesus, Caitanya, and Dhruva, to name only some from history and legends, had their proper initiation before they could secure this heaven-sent vision. Strict disciplinary rules regarding one's food, speech, sleep, etc., can avail practically nothing in the above direction. But it is essential that all predispositions (*saṁskāras*) are eliminated, and all desires and passions (*vāsanās*) curbed, in order that the competence for God-vision may be developed. The true knowledge comes only after the God-vision, when truths are revealed one after another in a regular sequence. The close attachment to the *sadguru* paves the way for the vision by purging the mind of all desires and predispositions.[54]

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53. S.S., V. p. 123.
54. S.S., V. p. 297.

It may be contended that as man is a rational being, the proper spring of his action ought to be intellectual conviction based upon an exercise of his rational faculties. This is, however, true so far as an ordinary human being is concerned. But as regards a *sādhaka* who has completely surrendered himself to a genuine and accredited *guru* or a *siddha,* reasoning is required to be subordinated to the commands of the *guru* on the one hand, and to the Divine Light on the other. A *siddha,* by his very nature and eminence in spiritual realisation, judges everything in the Divine Light. This is a part of his duty, the path to which is lighted by Divine Grace. So it is that a perfected person performs every action at the instance of the divine power within him, and not out of his own free will. His is the banner of truth which he holds aloft, with God's Will sustaining him.[55] In the case of a *sādhaka* too, it is not necessary to exercise powers of judgment. Rational judgments are needed in his case so long as his doubts and fears persist. But when these have been removed through the practice of the Holy Name at every breath, along with a disciplinary breath-control (*kumbhaka*), which has a great power of physical purification, the *sādhaka*'s mental outlook goes through a revolutionary process of change. He, then, hears a subtle sound issuing in his being every moment which gives to him a completely new idea about each particular object and its relative propriety. When this condition is established, it is no longer necessary for a *sādhaka*

55. S.S., III. p. 32.

to appeal to his reason for guidance, For then, all doubts are dissolved in the natural course. But until this state is attained, the propriety of an action has to be judged dispassionately before he sets himself to carry it out. In regard, however, to those who are already under the guidance of the *guru*, such discriminative powers need not be exercised, since words coming from the mouth of the *guru* are the categorical imperatives in which discrimination or judgment has no place.[56]

Aim of Life vis-a'-vis Positive Realisation :

Vijayakṛṣṇa held that in the spiritual advancement of a person, there should be a harmonious adjustment of means to the end. A man, before he sets out on the path of God-realisation, should keep in view a clear and well-defined picture of the ideal he wants to realise. He must have a firm conviction of the greatness and sanctity of his aim. The methods to be adopted for realising this ideal are of secondary importance. For, when the aim is once fixed, any course of action adopted in the hope of accomplishing the end would be regarded as equally good, though it is true that the action, whatever its nature, should be allowed to run in one direction. There is thus no hard and fast attachment of a particular *karma* to a particular result. If the aim is clear, any action may lead to the result. Mere determi-

56. S.S., III. p. 179.

nation of the nature of the goal, as we know, does not take a man forward if he does not exert himself at all. The nature of *karma* determines the individual path of man, and it is true that different paths may take one to the same goal.[57]

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Vijayakṛṣṇa on Grace and Human Effort :

Vijayakṛṣṇa had a firm faith in the unfailing efficacy of the Divine Grace. But his faith in Grace did not amount to a denial of personal effort. It was a part of his teaching that the highest spiritual perfection could not be attained by man merely by virtue of his personal merits; on the other hand, the Grace of *guru* or God was absolutely essential in the path of God-realisation. He considered the exclusive emphasis on personal effort or exertion as bad because it was the necessary outcome of the narrow egoistic consciousness.[58] Although this consciousness was condemned by him as hostile to true progress, he was also definitely of the opinion that a consciousness of this type was capable of being utilised by a wise *sādhaka* as a powerful instrument of destroying his own ego. In other words this means that all personal efforts emanate from the function of the ego and these efforts themselves can be channelised for the destruction of the

57. S.S., III. p. 228.
58. S.S., III. p. 151.

egoistic consciousness. The destruction of the ego is essential because the potent power of the *guru* can neither be felt nor appreciated. In short, it can do no benefit to us, so long as the egoistic consciousness persists. What we mean by an egoistic assertion or exaltation, or what constitute our worldly pleasure and pain, along with our predispositions, passions and desires, are the main stumbling blocks in our pursuit of Grace coming from both the *guru* and God. Until these tendencies of mind are put under a complete control, and a state of equanimity and equipoise is established, the personal efforts directed towards cleansing the ends, as told above, are indispensable. These efforts are synonymous with *sādhanā*, which in the system advocated by Vijayakṛṣṇa, takes the form of ceaseless and concentrated repetition of the Holy Name of the Lord. The feeling of personal incapacity, and the weakness of the flesh to contend with the spirit, about which many complain duringthe earlier stages of any spiritual pursuit, is unjustified and unwarranted, and hence requires to be discouraged. So long as a man has a will of his own and a power to exert himself, he must try to be self-reliant, without expecting and waiting for Grace, which comes only to those who have been able to surrender everything to the *guru* or God, and to whom the only reality is 'Thy will be done'. The floodgates of Grace are opened only to those whose ego has been completely dissolved by faith and purity.

It is only after the highest state of *samādhi*, that one realises that nothing happens without His Will. Efforts of a man must be supplemented by the Grace

before they are successful. If Grace is wanting, even the best efforts are bound to fail. But when the Grace is showered upon man generously, the individual efforts lead to fruitful results. The human will becomes powerful only when it is an avenue for the Master's Will in its divine play.[59]

It has been maintained that *prārabdha karma* is the most potent determinant of experiences in a man's life. But even this is rendered ineffective and impotent before His Will, which fulfils itself in diverse ways.[60] In the flood of Grace even the strongest *prārabdha* is washed away in a single moment.[61]

Evidently, Vijayakṛṣṇa was very emphatic on the absolute importance of Grace. He pointed out that the secret of *sādhanā* consists in the development of an alert state of passivity in man, so that he is able to receive Grace as and when it descends. No *sādhanā* can presume to bring down God to man, nor even to evoke His Mercy. His Grace is self-determined. It requires no external instrument to secure its outflow and manifestation.

It is idle to expect the descent of Grace so long as one's own effort, that is, the egoistic manifestation, has not exhausted itself. Human exertion, as has been said above, is indispensable until a man is entirely free from the inexorable cycle of joy and sorrow

59. S.S., V. pp. 194-195.
60. S.S., V. p. 196.
61. S.S., IV. p. 179.

(*sukha-dukha*), passion and anger (*rāga-dveṣa*), and the sense of honour and dishonour (*māna-apamāna*). So long as a man has his own will, what is really needed is one's exertion towards the attainment of freedom. With these enemies within us still active, it is the height of stupidity to sit idle and thirst for Grace.[62]

The first important condition for success is to build a genuine faith in the *guru*, and to abide implicitly by his commands. This can be done only by personal exertion based on the instruction received from the *guru*. The result of this implicit obedience to the *guru*'s commands is the realisation of that Grace which the *guru* has within himself. It is only in such a state of development that a man can be said to have fully surrendered himself to the *guru*'s will. One who has true faith in the *guru* can have the power of miracles. But a faith like this is extremely rare, and is always a matter of very difficult personal realisation, depending on extremely onerous exertion and effort.[63]

The aim of self-exertion, as an important milestone on the path of spiritual progress, is the purification of the self. Hence, the more a man exerts himself, the more he is able to see a clear picture of his own self in the process of becoming purer and purer. In consequence of this newly gained power, a man sees himself in the light of truth, shorn of all extraneous trappings and as distinct from the body. In this con-

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62. S.S., IV. pp. 187-188.
63. S.S., III. pp. 195-196; IV. p. 41.

dition, self-exertion, taking the form of a systematic course of penances, helps a man in realising his own weakness, though at the same time a distinct and desirable egoistic sense is also likely to be developed as a result of physical and mental control. Under the new egoistic impulse the man is led to think of himself as independent and free from all material bondage. The sense of freedom which lies inherent in every man is thus quickened by self-exertion, arousing thereby a strong desire for self-dedication. But the desire is not fulfilled. A secret urge within stands in the way of this dedication. It represents a mental struggle through which every pilgrim on the path has to pass. Self-introspection, therefore, is insisted upon as the means to overcome this obstacle. Self-exertion and cultivation of good society strengthen one's spiritual sense, intensifying one's urge for shelter in the shadow of Divine protection.[64]

Though everything can be achieved under the *guru*'s guidance, by the *sādhaka*'s complete self-surrender to the *guru*, a condition antecedent to this fortunate state is the effort and exertion, on the *sādhaka*'s part, in the direction of self-discipline and self-introspection. In brief, no effort should be spared by him to know himself. And he must remember that the keener and more persistent the effort, the easier and more pleasant it will be for him to obtain the heaven-sent Grace, disseminated through the *guru*, which is sure to come at its proper time. What is thus really needed, at the

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64. S.S., V. pp. 129-130.

very outset, is honest and conscientious effort on the part of the *sādhaka*.[65]

Those on the path of self-exertion must be prepared to be confronted with enormous difficulties on the way. These difficulties are of the nature of trials and temptations, which have to be undergone without any sense of being browbeaten, before one can hope to achieve a reign of undisturbed peace of mind. But an exception is made in regard to those who meekly stoop low in the awareness of their own abject weakness, and in total supplication depend entirely upon God's Grace. They are relieved of most of the trials and tribulations, though in their case, too, there are certain trials to be faced. God in His infinite mercy grants them the bliss of union with the Divine, but then He requires them to pass through what may be described as the disciplinary stages (*sādhanā*). If, in the former case, it is the strength and purity of the ego which is tested, in the latter case it is firmness of faith which is put to the test.[66]

The true reliance on God is confirmed only when one is absolutely convinced that personal effort is useless and that the Divine Power is all in all. It is through such reliance that the essence of God is revealed to the faithful devotees, and that, too, under His Grace.[67]

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65. S.S., II. pp. 12-13.
66. S.S., V. p. 295.
67. S.S., III. p. 40.

Vijayakṛṣṇa on Dīkṣā; Two Kinds of Dīkṣā; Vaidika and Tāntrika :

A careful study of Vijayakṛṣṇa's life, from the dawn of his spiritual consciousness, brings home to us the absolutely indispensable character of *dīkṣā* in the development of a higher spiritual life. *Dīkṣā*, or initiation, is usually taken to be a ceremony relevant to 'conversion' — an entrance into the spiritual life. But the true essence of *dīkṣā*, which lies embedded in the fundamental aspects of this ceremony, is a spiritual act of Grace on the part of the *guru*, which helps the destruction of ignorance in the disciple and the subsequent transformation of his entire personality. It represents a vital and vigorous flow of energy (*śakti-sañcāra*) into the soul. It is expressed through its setting into motion the process of awakening in the human soul the dormant Divine Power called *kula-kuṇḍalinī*. The dynamic power of a great saint, discharging the divine duty of a *guru* through its own irresistible influence, helps begin and activise the process. Even when awakened, the Power (*śakti*) tends to lapse into somnolence. It has, therefore, to be kept awake and active by the process of *nāma-japa* and *nāma-sādhanā*, in short, by the reiteration of the Divine Name in every breath.[68] The discipline practised by the disciple in his daily routine only quickens the action of this energy and lends an active hand in the removal of the obstructions caused by

68. S.S., V. p. 171.

the ills that the human flesh is heir to, which if not fought out and destroyed, are liable to block the path of spiritual development. The power of the *guru* is diffused and acts spontaneously in the disciple independently of the effect of the latter's personal exertions and efforts. The true aim of *dīkṣā* thus boils down to the realisation of Divinity in man; and this implies a dual activity in the regenerating power, viz., a negative one expressed through its destruction of the bonds of ignorance, and a positive one intended to bring out and establish in its characteristic refulgence and majesty the spark of Divinity latent in man. In other words, man is first liberated from the shackles of *māyā*; and then, on its heels, his divinisation follows.

We have already described, at some length in the first volume, the traditionally accepted principle and process of *dīkṣā* as enjoined in the *Tantras*. Vijayakṛṣṇa's insistence on *dīkṣā* is certainly in perfect accord with the traditional view. According to the *Tantras*, the life of a man, before he is properly initiated, is no better than that of an animal (*paśu*). The true human life commences only after initiation. The greatness of a *sadguru* lies in the fact that he is able, by his wisdom and superior power, to instil into the seeker a portion, as it were, of his own spiritual wealth, and invest him with a vital spiritual knowledge and elevation. This in effect, establishes the seeker firmly in his real being.

The influx of energy, referred to above, has the effect of rousing the dormant serpentine power (*kulakuṇḍalinī-śakti*) lying coiled in the disciple since birth.

Just as it is possible to kindle a lamp by the mere contact of another which is already burning, similarly in the case of human beings, the mere contact of the living spiritual energy of the *guru* rouses and sets aflame the dormant power of the disciple. The *guru,* in his essential personality, is none other than the Divine Principle which abides in every human being as its Indwelling Self (*antarātman*), on account of which illumination from within is always theoretically possible. Yet in view of the circumstances of the present spiritually degenerated age, the necessity of an enlightened human *guru* capable of awakening one's own inherent divinity is absolutely essential. For it is certain that, practically speaking, very few persons are able spiritually to elevate themselves without external help. This help comes in the form of *dīkṣā*—true *dīkṣā* from a competent *guru*, and not the formal ritualistic act passing commonly for *dīkṣā*.

Dīkṣā is the harbinger of good not only to the human beings who are alive but also to the departed souls who must suffer until the stain and stigma of their sin is washed off. A reading of Vijayakṛṣṇa's biography brings us to an apparently strange experience which the great saint once had in his life. A number of disembodied spirits passing their days in great agony, we are told, appeared before him and urged him to help them out of their suffering through *dīkṣā*.[69]

69. S.S., III. p. 188.

Of course Vijayakṛṣṇa did not initiate the spirits, as he failed to get the requisite permission from his *guru*. But something

Dīkṣā is commonly of two kinds, the one following the *Vedic* formulary, and the other following the *Tāntrika* one. In the former, the necessary qualifications of a *sadguru* are that he should be well-versed in the *Vedic* and *Vedāntic* lore, must be attached to one of the four orders of life (*āśramas*), and must observe the rules prescribed for it. He is entitled to impart the *oṁkāra mantra* only to a Brāhmin and not to the members of the other three castes. But the degenerated Brāhmins of present days, who are unable to rise to the true heights of the Vedic way of life concerning their particular *āśrama* and the associated *Vedic* practices, may not find this ideal easily realisable. To them the advice may be given to take recourse to the *Tantras* to which all the four castes and all mixed castes have equal access.

There are three stages in the *Tāntrika-sādhanā*, viz., *paśu*, *vīra*, and *divya*. One who has succeeded in this threefold *sādhanā* and has awakened the potency of the *mantra* along with its meaning, is indeed an adept who can claim that his *mantra* is perfect. The *Vedic*

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more wonderful followed. Vijayakṛṣṇa was in Vṛndāvana. When once he had his bath in the holy waters of the Yamunā, these spirits reappeared and, as he saw, they began to lick the drops of water dripping from his body, and — amazingly—immediately the spirits cast off their suffering and agony-ridden forms, became luminous and soared away to the celestial regions in equally luminous celestial vehicles (*vimānas*). However strange this might seem, we have precedents for such circumstances in the lives of the great saints of the past. There is, as we know, the reference to a similar episode in the life of the Buddha in the *Vimāna Vatthu*, the sixth *Khuddaka-nikāya* in *Sutta-piṭaka*.

oṁkāra becomes synthesised with this *mantra*. A *sad-guru*, thus, according to the *Tāntrika* belief, is one who has perfected his culture in the *siddha-mantra*, *i.e.*, the above synthesised form of it, and imparts it to men of all castes and clans, specifically ordained to do so by *Śiva*, the Divine Lord. Even a man without faith can attain liberation in three successive tenures upon the earth, if he cultivates the *siddha-mantra*.[70]

When one becomes convinced of the vanity and transitoriness of all worldly possessions, and when his mind becomes free from attachment and begins to feel a kind of aching void within itself, thirsting for something eternal and permanent, the indications point surely towards the fact that he has attained the necessary maturity for *dīkṣā*.[71]

Opportune Moment for Dīkṣā :

Each moment has its own potency. Solomon wrote,

"There is a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill and a time to heal".

In the case of *dīkṣā* also, all moments cannot be regarded as equally auspicious. There is a special moment (*muhūrta*) for this work, and when initiation

70. S.S., V. pp. 105-106.
71. S.S., V. p. 315.

is given at such a moment, it is bound to produce a favourable result.[72]

In Vijayakṛṣṇa's life as a *yogin*, it very often happened that persons who were his devoted admirers and who expressed a keen desire to have *dīkṣā* from him, used to have their desire fulfilled in a state of dream. *Dīkṣā* in dreams is not considered sufficiently powerful to bring forth the desired result. In all such cases Vijayakṛṣṇa insisted that these admirers should have the actual *dīkṣā* from him in a state of normal consciousness. He was of the opinion that such *dīkṣā* in a state of dream or trance, even when real, required to be supplemented by their repetition in a state of full consciousness.[73]

The seed which the *guru* sows in the soul of the disciple has a wonderful fecundity. It surely sprouts forth sooner or later in much richness; it can never be destroyed. The consciousness of and repentance for sin, the rise of noble desires in the heart, etc., are indications of the fact that the seed is germinating in the deepest layers of consciousness.[74]

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Vijayakṛṣṇa on Yoga and Its Kinds :

Literally, the word *'yoga'* means *'union'*. In its spiritual connotation it represents the process, as well

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72. S.S., IV. p. 210.
73. S.S., IV. p. 224.
74. S.S., V. p. 89.

as the result, of the unification between the individual soul (*jīvātman*) and the Divine Soul (*Paramātman*). *Jīvātman*, the human soul, has already been described. *Paramātman* symbolises the Universal Spirit. *Yoga* in its essence is highly pure; unless it were so, it could never bring about the union of the individual and the Divine. A man is not entitled to enter into its mysteries and dedicate himself to its *sādhanā*, if he does not possess the requisite qualifications of a strong sense of detachment, discrimination, humility and profound purity of the heart.[75]

A *yogin* is, in the true sense of the term, united (*yukta*) with the Universal Essence when he constantly feels his contact with *Para Brahman*—when his knowledge, love, and will represent, in fact, the Divine Knowledge, Love, and Will. Such a *yogin* is liberated from the earthly fetters (*jīvanmukta*), and has absolute control over his senses.[76] He is then, out and out, a free man. The culture of *yoga* is not confined to a particular sect or a particular *āśrama* or even to a particular sex. This we come to know on Vijayakṛṣṇa's own authority; he tells us from his personal experience about a good number of women *yogins* in Citrakūṭa on the banks of river Narmadā, and in the neighbourhood of Mānasarovara in the Himālayas.[77]

The *yogins* enjoying a high degree of elevation also rise above the common human need of sleep.

75. A.U., pp. 11-12.
76. A.U., p. 5.
77. A.U., pp. 6, 11.

But there is no hard and fast rule about it; sleep does not make any difference in respect of the luminous soul which is actively associated with *Brahman*. A *yogin* enjoying the union with the Divine (*yukta-yogin*) is, however, not subject to sleep, but remains always awake. He is always alert lest he might fall a victim to the snares of *māyā*, like conceit, jealousy, malice, passions, anger, etc.[78]

Vijayakṛṣṇa speaks of different kinds of *yoga*, and says that each of them is capable of purifying the soul and leading it to the Divine Union. From the practical point of view, however, he adds that it is not possible, or at any rate easy, for the people living in these degenerate times, with mental and spiritual vacuity, successfully to practise *rāja-yoga* and take advantage of its methods. Consequently, any attainment of success through this *yoga* in these days of spiritual bankruptcy is well-nigh impossible. As a matter of fact, what he says regarding *rāja-yoga* holds equally good in respect to every other form of *yoga* (as usually understood in the present age), except *bhakti-yoga*, which is the most suitable in the light of the present needs and ability. Vijayakṛṣṇa, therefore, maintains that *bhakti-yoga* alone is the royal road to success in this age. Elucidating the point further, he says that *karma-yoga* forms in the context of *bhakti*, its necessary precursor, and *jñāna-yoga*, its successor. What he means to say is that whoever wants to pursue the spiritual goal should devote himself heart and soul to the attainment of self-purification;

78. A.U., pp. 14-15.

this attainment will necessitate a struggle with the hostile forces, which will assert themselves and seek to frustrate all aspirations and attempts. It is necessary in the interest of spiritual transformation that one should not fall a victim to temptations and other enemies working within him. What is needed is that one should under no circumstances lapse into despair, but 'keep one's banners up'. He should always keep in his mind that, if perseverance and faith in divine justice are not lost, there is really no ground for despair. Even apparent failures are turned into success, if only the right spirit and faith are maintained. The real object in keeping a man engaged in this struggle is to make him realise fully that what he has all along considered to be his positive qualifications, *i.e.*, his so-called powers and prestige, do not count for anything in the long run so far as the question of conquering his own passions is concerned. During the struggle, as his egoism and conceit are gradually destroyed, he feels more and more that in reality he has been worse and weaker than a mere straw, pathetically at the mercy of the dark forces seeking to carry him to his doom. This realisation makes him seek for the necessary guidance, and this is what he gets through the grace of the *guru*. Thus he spontaneously surrenders himself, his independent will and effort, to this guide. The light of faith which now begins to glow within him reveals to him that whatever happens in life is ultimately due to the Divine Will, relayed through the *guru*'s grace. The result of his surrender to this Will expresses itself in the automatic revelation to the eternal truths and verities to his consciousness.

What has been described above is the elucidation of the synthesis of *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga,* which Vijayakṛṣṇa emphasised in his teachings. The struggle referred to above is the *karma,* the surrender being *bhakti,* to which the truth-revelation comes as the dissemination of *jñāna.* The true aim of undergoing a process of spiritual discipline is thus simply to discover that neither rigid austerities, nor detachment, nor renunciation, nor even unceasing efforts avail in the matter of true realisation, and that nothing of real worth can be secured except through His Grace. Realisation of the futility of human efforts and the supreme efficacy of Divine Grace is the end of all *sādhanā.*[79]

Vijayakṛṣṇa on Important Elements of Yoga :

Vijayakṛṣṇa does not call his own method a *yoga* of one of the well-known varieties. Yet, as we see it, it is certainly a form of higher *yoga,* in which the principles recognised in *Yoga-śāstras, i.e.,* in the scriptural works on *yoga,* are certainly accepted and given a proper place. His ideas on the most important elements of *yoga,* so far as the psycho-physical disciplines are concerned, may be summed up in the following lines :

(1) Observance of celibacy (*brahmacarya*) :

As regards *brahmacarya,* Vijayakṛṣṇa observes that it is aimed at removing the troubles

79. S.S., III. pp. 163, 259-260.

incidental to humanity, that arise from lust (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*), etc. For these, according to him, though part and parcel of human nature, represent only an abnormal condition, from the spiritual standpoint. These disturbances are mostly physical in nature and spring from the vital sap of the body. Hence what is most essential is to tackle them at the root, by drying up the body through a regulated diet.[80]

Another essential prerequisite in this connection, according to Vijayakṛṣṇa, is an extremely difficult process of sublimation of the sex energy. Success in this direction requires different periods of time for men according to their capacity and ability. While, for some, three days may be enough for obtaining success, others may require as many as three years to reach the goal. There are others to whom it may appear well-nigh impossible. The fact is, those who begin to practise the necessary discipline early in life, usually take a shorter time than those who begin late. The rules laid down for the practice are :

(*a*) Concentration of the gaze on the toes of both the feet.

(*b*) Refraining from looking aside, even in the dark. If the practice under (*a*) above is considered difficult, attention may be fixed upon the tip of the nose. But

80. S.S., II. p. 86.

it should be remembered that this alternative will tend to keep the head warm, and not cool, as in the case of foot-gazing.

(*c*) Constantly keeping the head bent down.

(*d*) Micturation at intervals, and not in an unceasing flow.

(*e*) Repetition and reiteration of the Divine Name in concentrated devotion to it, along with the disciplinary breath-control through *kumbhaka*.

There is a narrow track within the body leading upwards, which the sex-energy uses for downward travel, and by its tremendous power lays hold on the person. In view of this, any upward movement becomes impossible unless the downward track is thoroughly blocked. It is impossible to hold back the energy within the body unless it is diverted upwards. This energy is, however, never stable, though when it is aflame, it is irresistible. Sometimes people take to artificial means in order to neutralise the downward momentum and to reduce the heat of the body, by the blocking or cutting of specific arteries and channels, and also by other means. But these methods do not achieve anything from the spiritual standpoint.

The best way, thus, is to draw the energy upwards through *kumbhaka*, simultaneously with mental concentration, and *nāma-sādhanā* with every breath. *Kumbhaka* has the rare potency of interrupting

the downward flow of the vital fluid in us. It also broadens the upward track. Once the upward movement of the fluid is begun, through the spiritual discipline and *sādhanā*, its downward course ceases forever. The upward current synchronises with an unspeakable repletion felt in every sinew of the body, analogous to what may be felt in the ideal state of one's immersion in tranquillity. Artificial practices such as those of *kumbhaka* and *yoni-mudrā*, by themselves, are worse than useless. Unceasing natural *kumbhaka,* practised in the natural process along with the reiteration of the Divine Name in every breath, is, on the other hand, the best remedy.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's opposition to the use of external means (medicines, etc.) for the maintenance of required level of *brahmacarya* was absolutely uncompromising. He referred, for example, to particular types of *yoga-sādhanā* aimed at imparting an upward momentum to the flow of the vital fluid. One of these *sādhanās* is extremely painful and is directed towards creating fresh tracks on both sides of the spinal column. This process, if once adopted, cannot be easily given up, and hence a return to the normal state is well-nigh impossible. This is what is technically known as *Vajroli*. Vijayakṛṣṇa forbids his disciples to resort to these arduous and risky methods.

On the other hand, his emphasis always falls upon the easier and more reliable methods of practising *brahmacarya* as a means to self-purification. Combining a spiritual goal with pragmatism, we find

him telling his disciples with the strongest emphasis that surrender and submission lie at the base of success in *brahmacarya*. All that smacks of egotism is hostile to it. *Brahmacarya* is the foundation of the entire structure of spiritual life, and can be realised only through the grace of the *guru*.[81] The physical body, though considered lowest in the scale of spirituality, is certainly the most important instrument for attainment of spiritual perfection. Explaining this apparent paradox, Vijayakṛṣṇa says that the true nourishment of the body results not from the consumption of rich food, but from true continence and purity.

Mens sana in corpore sano is certainly a great truth; the body must be healthy and pure so that it may serve as the strong foundation for the spiritual progress.[82] But even with all this, any degree of stability in *brahmacarya* is very difficult to be acquired through sustained efforts, unless, of course, the *sadguru* as a part of his divine mission of bestowing Grace on the deserving,

81. Vijayakṛṣṇa's remarks on the two *mudrās,* viz., *vajroli* and *sahajoli,* are evidently based upon his reading of the statements to this effect in *Haṭha-yoga-pradīpikā*, III. pp. 83-95, 96-103. The easier method (vide S.S., III. p. 149) as stated above, is suggested not merely as an alternative but as the most suitable for all. Those who are interested in a special and detailed study of the problem of sex-sublimation, may refer to Brahmacārin Kuladānanda's work on the subject. (vide. S.S., III, pp. 60-62; IV. pp. 54-201).

82. S.S., III. p. 180; cf. *śarīramādyaṁ khalu dharmasādhanaṁ* (*Kumārasambhava* by Kālidāsa).

imparts it at his own will. In that case no special effort on the part of the *sādhaka* is required to accomplish his objective. But ordinarily, the *guru* never does it. He wants the receptacle to be stable, strong and pure. For him, the pouring down of energy and dissemination of it in the disciple, which he can do easily, is a moment's affair. But what he keenly looks for is that the disciple must know the true value of the spiritual energy, before he can reasonably expect to be in possession of it. Not that the success in *brahmacarya* as a free gift is not really useful. But when it is obtained through one's own personal exertion, it is doubly blessed and doubly efficacious.

In the light of *brahmacarya*, Vijayakṛṣṇa's persistent emphasis falls on the path which leads to it, on the virtues to be developed in order to reach the goal. Truth and chastity lie at the bottom of all *sādhanā*. If these virtues are properly cultivated, patience, concentration, and illumination follow as a matter of course.[83] The fruit of this *sādhanā* cannot be truly obtained until perfection in chastity and truthfulness has been attained.[84] In this connection the vow of silence, occasionally undertaken, is not quite a desirable practice until *brahmacarya* has been fully attained. Any rigorous and self-imposed silence for one who is not a *brahmacārin*, is liable to cause derangement of the

83. S.S., IV. pp. 3, 9.
84. S.S., IV. p. 16.

mind and might make the man vulnerable to renal diseases.[85]

The power gained by the sublimation of sex-energy, *i.e.*, making the fluid flow up, is indeed a great privilege. It is a monumental accomplishment on the spiritual path. But even in respect of it, any undue emphasis on it is not a sign of healthy spiritual life; we must be forewarned that even *brahmacarya* under certain circumstances proves to be a snare or temptation.[86] Vijayakṛṣṇa naturally makes almost a threadbare analysis of it lest it should be misunderstood and misdirected by his disciples and admirers. In his analysis he starts from the base of the problem by an examination of the sex-instinct natural to all men and women. Lust, or more correctly, the sex-impulse in man (*kāma*), as such, is not a sin, for the simple reason that it forms an essential part of human nature. Its improper use is certainly sinful. If it were put under the proper restraint, as enjoined by the holy scriptures (*śāstras*), and made to work accordingly, it would not be a sin at all. By itself the presence of a carnal thought in the mind cannot be a sin. But indulgence in such a thought and getting involved in it is certainly reprehensible.

It is interesting to recall that Vijayakṛṣṇa prescribes an indigenous antidote in order to

85. S.S., IV. p. 186.
86. S.S., IV. p. 95.

cure a man suffering from oppressive and persistent carnal desires. He says that carnal excitement is appreciably reduced under the action of the green margosa leaves (*nīm*), which are bitter in taste, and taken daily with water.[87] What is known as *kāma* or passions when the seminal flow is outward, becomes transformed into *prema* or love when the pull of the flesh upon the fluid is completely replaced by the pull of the spirit upon it, and as a consequence when its downward and outward flow is changed into an upward and inward flow. *Kāma* belongs to the category of the physical property, but *prema* is a quality of the soul, and indeed is the soul itself. Dietetic restraint in this respect is specially enjoined for weakening the hold of the flesh upon this tremendously powerful and potential physico-spiritual energy.[88]

Yoga, for its success, depends on *brahmacarya*. When the sex-energy becomes stabilised in the body, mental concentration becomes easily attainable; but when it is unstable, the mind is naturally restless. Mental concentration is a great asset on the spiritual path. It is true that love and devotion are obtained only through God's grace. But we must deserve it by purifying ourselves. If *brahmacarya* is once established, the body becomes free from disease and the mind is

87. S.S., IV. pp. 98-99.
88. S.S., IV. pp. 98-99.

purged of all the cobwebs of distractions and temptations.

Why do people undergoing *brahmacarya* usually don ochre-coloured garments and have matted hair? Normally, it is the discipline itself which inspires them to do so. But these outward manifestations are no correct measure of the degree of *brahmacarya* attained. All the *brahmacārins* are not necessarily of one spiritual state. Those who sublimate the energy stored in the vital sap in us, along different paths, through devotion or through *jñāna* or through *haṭha-yoga*, differ among themselves regarding their levels of elevation and newly gained energy.

One unmistakable sign of a signal spiritual elevation, through the successful practice of *brahmacarya*, is the state of the human frame. The body of a man is subject to constant change. This is a part of the nature of the created world. But when a man succeeds in accomplishing the sublimating process referred to above, no further change in the body can take place. The body continues to retain its unchanged character throughout its tenure upon the earth.[89]

(2) Observance of non-attachment (*vairāgya*), truth (*satya*), and non-violence (*ahiṁsā*), etc.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's teachings are a clear record of his deep and extensive knowledge of all the

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89. S.S., IV. p. 293.

methods, prescribed by the ancient seers and scriptures, of spiritual elevation. He is always careful to see that the method which he prescribes to his disciples is the one which he, by his own experience, has found to be suitable and practicable, and which at the same time, is easy enough for his householder-disciples. In this context he says that celibacy and truth (*brahmacarya* and *satya*) if observed unfailingly for a minimum period of six months, lead to *vāk-siddhi*, which forms a particular stage of inner purification. Vijayakṛṣṇa, however, does not recommend this path as the be all and end all of the matter. He considers, as has already been said above, the reliance upon the repetition of the Holy Name in every breath as the most important *via media* from every point of view. Daily *kumbhaka* with strict continence, likewise, leads to good health and mental and physical purity, but by itself it cannot help the seeker achieve much.

Similarly, Vijayakṛṣṇa sounds a note of warning about the sublimation of sex-energy, of changing the direction of the flow of the seminal fluid at once upward and inward. This sublimation, already described above, is liable to prove more harmful than useful, if the spiritual vision of the *sādhaka* is not clear. There is no doubt that it gives rise to an exceeding joy, more intense than that of sexual union. But it is a joy manifested only on the physical level. Its attainment may possibly make one forgetful of one's true aim in life. The pity of the whole thing is that this

joy is very often mistaken for *Brahmānanda,* the ineffable bliss of the union with *Brahman.* The *ṛṣi* Durbāsā, whose example Vijayakṛṣṇa points out, was an adept in sublimation and was endowed with many supernormal powers. The consequence of this was the rise of conceit and arrogance owing to which he did not care for anybody. In the long run he suffered on this account when all his powers vanished.

The *sādhaka* who has successfully turned the flow of the seminal fluid from the downward course to the upward course (*ūrdhvaretā*), therefore, has more risks to face than the prospect of any tangible achievement. The mere fact of having succeeded in the sublimation of the vital energy is not a guarantee of one's qualification for the Divine Union. On the other hand, it is genuinely possible for a man to realise God and enjoy union with Him if there is only devotion in him—there being no greater qualification for God-realisation than devotion. Although he may have been guilty of carnal enjoyments, the clear waters of true devotion will not merely wash him of all his sins but take him to the regions of the highest bliss. Even if a man, says Vijayakṛṣṇa, becomes established in *brahmacarya*, but is proud of the fact, he invites his own doom. Pride and conceit halt all progress along the spiritual path. Pride (*ahaṁkāra*) is a worse enemy than any other passion.

Like *brahmacarya*, truth (*satya*) and non-violence (*ahiṁsā*) are the two other important virtues which

accelerate the *sādhaka*'s progress along the spiritual path, provided of course, the cultivation of these virtues are not attended with pride. True devotion (*bhakti*) remains the fountainhead of his energy. Devotion to truth is one of the bases of spiritual life. Truth implies veracity and straightforwardness in speech, conduct, and thought. Yet it is very difficult for a man to know what truth actually is. It can be discovered only when the mind is crystal clear, free from opinions, prejudices and predispositions.[90] Non-violence (*ahiṁsā*) is also a cardinal virtue and is supposed to be a natural quality of a *Brāhmin*.[91] It is certainly a noble ideal. But once again we notice Vijayakṛṣṇa's realism when he says that violence (*hiṁsā*) in the dispensation of the world affairs is sometimes inevitable and unavoidable.[92] Importance is attached to detachment and renunciation (*vairāgya*) implying a complete non-involvement in worldly possessions and enjoyments. The development of these virtues enables a man speedily to realise *mokṣa*. But it is only when the mind is fully drawn inwards, and *nāma-sādhanā* is continued with every breath, that such *vairāgya* becomes possible. Undiluted devotion, therefore, is the path to the attainment of *vairāgya*. *Vairāgya*, when sincere, protects a man from the attacks of hostile forces.[93] True *vairāgya*,

90. S.S., I. p. 98 ; III. p. 117; IV. pp. 9-10, 12-13 and V. p. 187.
91. S.S., V. p. 166.
92. S.S., IV. p. 27.
93. S.S., II. p. 73.

which thus consists in detachment from worldly objects, *i.e.*, in the withdrawal of senses from their objects, does not mean renunciation of action. It originates from a systematic discharge of one's duty, especially the spiritual duties.[94]

True *vairāgya* is not possible without the destruction of worldly attachment or the threefold pain (*tritāpa*). The indication of such destruction is the attainment of freedom from hunger, thirst, sickness, bereavement, etc., in which state the performance of duties goes on unabated. Non-attachment does of course constitute the stamp of a genuine dutifulness in which personal likes and dislikes have no place at all.[95]

It is not to be supposed that *vairāgya* excludes enjoyment (*bhoga*) altogether. Enjoyment which is permitted as unobjectionable (*vaidha-bhoga*) is intended to help one get rid of *karma*. It includes not only enjoyments sanctioned by the *śāstras*, but also different *karmas*, meant for the men of different natures, which are directed towards the attainment of the ultimate freedom from enjoyment (*bhoga*). These *karmas* are earmarked according to one's nature and constitution. In its own way, if we can at all call it so, the enjoyment derived from such *karmas* is harmless, pure, and sanctified (*vaidha-bhoga*). It is, therefore, desirable for the final exhaustion of *bhoga* to perform *karmas* accord-

94. S.S., II. p. 86.
95. S.S., III. p. 126.

ing to one's own nature as prescribed in the *śāstras*. The characteristics (*lakṣaṇas*) of different natures are to be found in the *śāstras*, but a knowledge of these is not enough to enable one to find access to the knowledge of nature, and as a consequence know what *karma* is suitable for him. The determination of one's nature cannot be done by one's own self. One has to depend for it on the *sadguru* who perceives the individual nature of each one of his disciples and prescribes actions for him accordingly. Obedience to the *guru* without any reservation is, thus, the easiest way of bringing the *karmas*, and also the *bhogas*, to an end.[96]

Other Cardinal Virtues Conducive to Yoga :

On several occasions Vijayakṛṣṇa spoke highly of certain cardinal virtues as conducive to perfecton in *yoga*. These include truthfulness (*satya*), celibacy (*brahmacarya*) and non-violence (*ahiṁsā*), to which reference has been already made. Following are some additional qualities :

(*a*) *Śauca* (purity) :

Purity may be either physical or mental. Physical purity in the case of *sannyāsins* is the permanent sublimation of sexual energy, and

96. S.S., II. pp. 73-74.

for householders, it is confined to stated seasons. In both the cases purity is judged from the point of view of the sex-impulse and energy in man. Mental purity, however, is simplicity and straightforwardness.

(*b*) *Kṣamā* (forgiveness) :

It is forgiveness towards all creatures. It is the expression of tolerance and love.

(*c*) *Kṣānti* (tranquillity and contentment) :

Mental composure is difficult to attain. But once attained, it expresses itself through equanimity and tranquillity, than which nothing in the world can be more valuable. It is not merely a freedom from the storms of passion, but the attainment of a wholeness which helps spread peace and tranquillity all around.

If these qualities are attained, a man is spiritual even if he has no faith in God or does not practice *nāma-sādhanā* with absolute devotion. The concept of Divine Love (*prema-bhakti*) is of course different, for it is an irresistible force which must lead the *sādhaka* to this longed-for goal, even if these virtues are not able to be cultivated and perfected by him. No additional effort is needed for the cultivation of the above type of Divine Love.[97]

97. S.S., II. p. 73.

Vices to be Avoided :

Like the virtues, Vijayakṛṣṇa also speaks of the three cardinal vices. They are :

(*a*) *Kāma* (physical and carnal passion) :

This is the main impediment in the path both of *brahmacarya* and the development of a deep-seated devotion in the heart, and certainly it must be eradicated.

(*b*) *Krodha* (anger) :

The overweening tyranny of the passion of anger in a man darkens his spirit and makes it impossible for him to gain any equipoise. It needs be curbed and fought out.

(*c*) *Lobha* (greed) :

Under its domination the gaze is deflected outward, making all spiritual pursuits impossible. The sooner it is conquered, the better it is for a steady pursuit of the spiritual goal.

A person in the trap of these vices might despair of being saved and salvaged. But the most potent remedy for these dispositions is the *nāma-sādhanā*, *i.e.*, the exclusive concentration upon the repetition of the Divine Name with every breath.[98]

When the aim is for an absolutely disinterested pursuit of liberation (*niṣkāma mukti*), the path is difficult indeed. The *sādhaka* pursuing this goal is

98. S.S., IV. p. 16.

indifferent and unattached to everything. In this process he is liable to run the gauntlet of an opposition from not merely his fellow human beings but from the superhuman beings like the *gandharvas* and the celestial beings of heaven. The latter may give him threats or temptations, the victory over which proves his true worth as a *sādhaka* and facilitates his success along his chosen spiritual path. The two things that are essentially needed in him to enable him to keep his head high are renunciation of all desires (*vāsanās*) and strenuous spiritual striving. It is as an aid to this twofold imperative that actions performed according to scriptural injunctions (*vaidha-karma*), to which reference has been made earlier, is enjoined, because it alone can exhaust all involvement in enjoyment (*bhoga*) and can simplify everything.[99]

Vijayakṛṣṇa on Yogic Disciplines :

Āsana :

Devotion, or *brahmacarya*, or, for that matter, any other virtue, requires an uninterrupted mental concentration, without which no spiritual discipline is possible. Vijayakṛṣṇa naturally draws attention to mental concentration, on which, again, his views are practical and based entirely upon his personal experience. He starts with the physico-spiritual exercises called *Āsana*. *Āsana* means a particular physi-

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99. S.S., II. p. 73.

cal posture or pose of the body considered helpful in securing mental concentration. Different *āsanas* are named and described in the works on *haṭha-yoga*. Concerning the number of *āsanas,* Vijayakṛṣṇa says, in tune with ancient teachers, that there are in reality as many *āsanas* as there are kinds of living beings. The number of such kinds of beings is supposed to be eighty-four *lakṣa* or *lākh* (*caurāśī lakṣa*) which is, therefore, the number of *āsanas* recognised in *Yoga-śāstras*. Eighty-four *āsanas*, however, are supposed to be the important ones and, out of these eighty-four, *padmāsana* and *siddhāsana* are supposed to be the best. Of these two again, *siddhāsana* is undoubtedly much better than *padmāsana*. The value of this last named *āsana* for a practitioner of *yoga* can hardly be overrated, though it has to be accepted that every individual posture (*āsana*) has its own value and utility.[100]

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100. S.S., III. pp. 47-48.

The term *āsana* is also used in the sense of a piece of carpet, or blanket, or anything else of a like nature which is spread out on the ground and intended for sitting upon. In this context of the term, a *sādhaka*, as a practitioner, is required to maintain his own private *āsana*, and keep it inviolate by not allowing it to be used by others. The importance given to the seat thus invests it with a symbolical meaning. Judged in this context, the adoption of an *āsana* means not simply the taking of an *āsana* for sitting upon, but really the resolution to respect the sanctity of the *āsana*, and to conform to all the rules for maintaining this sanctity. Some of these rules are mentioned below :

(*a*) The *āsana* should be kept spread out according to the direction of the *guru* at a particular place.

(2) *Prāṇāyāma* :

Prāṇāyāma (breath-control) should not be practised in the presence of other persons, especially those who have no faith in it.[101] If *prāṇāyāma* is practised slowly but steadily, it keeps the body healthy and free from disease. It is advisable to associate the repetition of the Divine Name with the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, while holding the breath for a short time.[102] The stage of *prāṇāyāma*

(*b*) It should be used everyday, at least for some time, at a definite hour during the worship.

(*c*) Every spiritual exercise should be performed while sitting upon the *āsana*.

(*d*) It should not be allowed to be used by others, for in that case the intrinsic quality of the *āsana* will disappear.

(*e*) It should, as far as possible, be kept in its own place and not removed elsewhere. In case such removal be considered necessary, the place just left should not be forgotten. There should be at least a straw put there to mark the spot.

The *āsanas* used by the great saints are sometimes the favourite resorts of snakes, specially those snakes which live in the vicinity of the residential houses. These poisonous snakes have an extraordinary attraction, for such *āsanas*. It is, therefore, sometimes not very safe to remove any seat like these without the permission of the *sādhaka* whose seat it is.

It is not proper for a *yogin* to leave his *āsana* in the course of his *sādhanā*. If the *āsana* is left before the suprapsychic experience has come to a natural end, there is likely to be a great spiritual loss.

101. S.S., I. p. 43.
102. S.S., I. p. 68.

sādhanā is followed by a stage of higher exercises, in which certain rules have to be followed. These are ten in number and may be described as follows :

(*a*) The discipline of the concentrated gaze (*dṛṣṭi-sādhanā*), which is rather difficult to be achieved, and for which one should strictly follow the prescribed methods in relation to each of the five elements of which the human body is composed.

(*b*) The cultivation of the following virtues, viz., mental quiet (*śama*), restraint of senses (*dama*), patience and fortitude in the midst of distractions and troubles (*titikṣā*), meditation on the unreality of the world, on death and on life beyond death (*uparati*), and equanimity of mind in the face of all worldly fetishes like pleasure, pain, honour, praise, insult, blame, etc. (*dvandva-sahiṣṇutā*).

(*c*) Daily study of the holy books (*svādhyāya*) especially those written by the ancient *ṛṣis, e.g.*, the *Mokṣaparva* of the *Mahābhārata*, *Gītā*, etc. The daily study of and concentration upon at least one or two verses (*ślokas*) from the works like these, is a 'must' in this respect for the *sādhaka*.

(*d*) Daily cultivation of good and holy society (*satsaṅga*), *i.e.*, visit to a holy saint and listening to a discourse on spiritual topic everyday. This acts as a tonic and helps maintain

steadiness, courage and purity of the heart and the mind.

(*e*) Daily practice of munificence (*dāna*), which does not mean the giving of alms, so much as the spontaneous expression of one's yearning for other's spiritual welfare. It may be expressed even by one good word uttered everyday, *i.e.*, a word which may be of spiritual benefit to others.[103]

(*f*) Penances (*tapasyā*) need also be practised. These, normally, form the course of regular *sādhanā* prescribed. *Prāṇāyāma* sets the ball rolling in this respect. Eight kinds of *prāṇāyāma* are found mentioned in the *śastras*. These are, however, intended for the neophytes. But the *prāṇāyāma* taught by Vijayakṛṣṇa, and the one to which he assigns the greatest importance, appears to be the one suggested in one of the *Tāpanī Upaniṣads*. This *prāṇāyāma* is difficult and has to be learned from a self-realised (*siddha*) *guru,* and not from books, lest there should be disastrous consequences. Wrongly practised *prāṇāyāma,* Vijayakṛṣṇa warns, leads to incurable diseases. Hence the methods of a *prāṇāyāma* of this type are kept away from the multitude. It is only to a very rare and competent person that the *siddhas* communicate the secrets.[104] This *prāṇāyāma*

103. S.S., I. p. 110.
104. S.S., II. 98.

and its parallel discipline, *kumbhaka*, have to be practised for a minimum period of six months, accompanied by *brahmacarya*.[105]

In all the above-mentioned practices we find how Vijayakṛṣṇa insists upon a thorough self-purification through disciplinary exercises, good deeds and thoughts and, more than anything else, through an inundation of the heart by intense love and devotion. His method is doubly convincing because it is supported and confirmed by personal experience as well by the accredited *yogins* and saints of the past. Though broad-based, liberal, and practical, the method being simplified in a number of ways to suit the requirements and abilities of his disciples, Vijayakṛṣṇa puts emphasis on a true mentor (*sadguru*) who alone can light the path of a seeker on the arduous march towards the goal of God-realisation. Evidently, remembering the importance assigned to a *sadguru* in the holy books of the past, the *sadguru* being identified there with an incarnation of the Deity, Vijayakṛṣṇa feels that the progress along the spiritual path is liable to be halting or may even be a still-born process, unless the redeeming grace of the *sadguru*, which is nothing else but Divine Grace, is luckily obtained.

Moreover, there is in his teachings a happy note of eclecticism—he draws out and harmonises the best to be found in diverse types of thoughts

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105. S.S., p. 98.

and studies, which must go to his credit as an illustration of his wonderfully comprehensive knowledge and of a refreshingly open mind in respect to the paths diversely chalked out. His distinction of *sādhaka* and *yogin* must always be based upon all this. We have, so far, given a fair amount of detail about the practical advice in regard to the spiritual quest, with which his teachings are full; and in the paragraphs that follow, we take up certain other salient points made out by him regarding what has been said above.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's views on the anatomy of the physico-spiritual process within the human body leads him to the identification of the most important among the seventy-two thousand nerves (*nāḍīs*) within the human body. Through these nerves the vital current of air, which keeps the body alive, goes on flowing. The aim of *prāṇāyāma* is to attain a complete control over the flow of this current, in order to make it flow without any hindrance along its particular path. The flow of the current (*vāyu*) is different in each of the nerves (*nāḍīs*). Hence *prāṇāyāma* also is of seventy-two thousand kinds. Some forms of *prāṇāyāma* may even take the shape of physical contortions and various ejaculations. These secret processes, in all their plenitude, have disappeared. A few mendicants, sages, and *faqīrs*, however, possess the secrets according to Vijayakṛṣṇa.[106]

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106. S.S., I. pp. 43-44.

When the relatively natural and easily practicable *prāṇāyāma*, as taught by Vijayakṛṣṇa, is practised with the aim of making the vital *vāyu* flow freely through the particular nervous tracts, an exquisite sound, very sweet to hear, comes out — a sound which allures even snakes and brings them from long distances. If the sound continues for some time, these snakes crawl up the body of the *yogin* and with their hoods spread out, offering a canopy on the *yogin*'s head, listen as if in a charmed state to the ethereal music.[107]

(3) *Kumbhaka* :

The process of *kumbhaka* taught by Vijayakṛṣṇa is again marked by originality. It is altogether different from the artificial process generally followed by the people. In Vijayakṛṣṇa's prescription the *kumbhaka* is, at its inception, a slow inhalation of breath through *prāṇāyāma*, according to the instruction of the *guru*. In the next stage, the breath inhaled is taken down to the *mūlādhāra*, where it is fixed in the lowest centre, followed by a closing of all the sense avenues, higher and lower, and restraining of inhalation, exhalation, and the entrance of the wind (*vāyu*). It is at this stage that attention and concentration should be fixed upon the Holy Name with a steady retention, according to the power of one's indrawn breath. This disciplinary practice helps in the

107. S.S., IV. p. 128.

elimination, by degrees, of all the memories and associations of the external world. Even the body-consciousness disappears altogether. What is exclusively and intensely felt is the sole devotion to the Holy Name. Everything else is obliterated. Vijayakṛṣṇa points out that this secret, which is an efficacious process of spiritual discipline, is hinted at in the *Gītā*, though it is not widely known to the community of the *sādhakas*.

The practice of *kumbhaka*, done everyday in a regular manner, ensures longevity and freedom from physical ailments. If *kumbhaka* is attended with strict continence, the body becomes purified. In the earlier stages of *nāma-sādhanā*, the seeker must keep in view that the Holy Name has to be taken with every breath. In due course, however, he becomes acquainted with the forceful current of breath which flows along the spinal column. When this is discovered, the prayer should be combined with the taking of the Holy Name. *Prāṇāyāma*, if at all it is practised at this stage, should be continued for half an hour in a sitting posture. No *prāṇāyāma* should be undertaken while standing or walking. The early hours of the morning are the best time for its practice.[108]

(4) *Pratyāhāra* :

Further, Vijayakṛṣṇa comes to a discussion of certain positive actions as a part of the disci-

108. S.S., IV. pp. 157-158.

plinary activities aiming at self-purification. Among these, next comes *pratyāhāra* which means gathering the scattered mind, and concentrating it on the spiritual goal.[109]

(5) *Dhāraṇā* :

Next is *dhāraṇā* which means the power of retention of the spiritual state which arises as a result of *nāma-japa*.[110]

(6) *Dṛṣṭi-sādhanā or Trāṭaka* :

Dṛṣṭi-sādhanā also called *trāṭaka* (literally meaning 'gazing') is the next which may be practised by itself or along with breath-control.[111] The practice of gazing (*dṛṣṭi*) does not mean necessarily that the eyes, in an opened state, are to be fixed on an object. Instead, the eyes are sometimes required to be closed and the mind to be fixed on a particular centre in the body. This is thus equivalent to the practice of deep devotional meditation (*dhyāna*). The practice of the gazing of the above type, even for a few days, results in the manifestation of multicoloured lights and forms. This practice, to ensure good and speedy results, should be accompanied by the repetition of the Holy Name while sitting in a fixed posture (*āsana*). The aim of this practice is to

109. S.S., IV. p. 158.
110. S.S., IV. p. 159.
111. S.S., I. p. 68.

fix the mind steadily at a particular spot. The physical effect of this practice is also salutary; it shows itself in the removal of certain diseases of the body, viz., dyspepsia, gout, intestinal dropsy, biliousness, etc.[112]

Further, the practice of *trāṭaka* helps to clear the eyesight and augments vision. As a result, distant and subtle objects are made visible. Gazing is practised by focusing the eyes on one of the five elements at a time, usually beginning with the earth (*kṣiti*). Progression from one element to another depends on the attainment of progressive maturity.[113] The effect of the practice upon the mind is to stop it from wandering; and steadiness of the mind is a great asset to a devotee on the way to realise the spiritual goal.[114] There are progressive stages through which the discipline of gazing should be pursued, the objects of gaze changing accordingly. The stages of progress in this *sādhanā*, associated with the discipline of gazing (*trāṭaka*) may be enumerated as follows :

(*a*) *Gazing on the Tree* :

This practice should be continued till it is possible to keep a winkless gaze fixed on a point for one hour, without allowing tears to flow.

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112. S.S., I. p. 113.
113. S.S., II. p. 49.
114. S.S., IV. p. 159.

(*b*) *Gazing on the Sky* (*ākāśa*) :

In this practice a particular spot in the blue sky should be the object of the gaze. The practice has to be limited to only an hour.

(*c*) *Gazing on the Flowing Water* :

This practice also should be limited to an hour.

(*d*) *Gazing on a Burning Lamp* (*pradīp*) :

In this practice the lamp should be fed with *ghee* (clarified butter) and kept at a place free from draughts of air. This practice may be continued for two hours.

(*e*) *Gazing on the Sun* :

This is recommended at sunrise and for three hours thereafter. It should be remembered that one should not try to practise gazing at the sun until continence is firmly established. Householders are, therefore, forbidden to practise this last item.

(7) *Dhyāna* :

On meditation (*dhyāna*), Vijayakṛṣṇa's views may be summed up as follows. Two kinds of meditation are mentioned in the ancient Hindu

scriptures, viz., *vaidha* and *rāga*. Vijayakṛṣṇa's conception of meditation is, however, neither of the two; it is certainly original. It consists in the dedicated repetition of the Holy Name and fixing the mind in a particular centre (*cakra*) in the body, and the eyes on a particular object. This composite practice of *dhyāna* leads to a state of steadiness in which a divine form is manifested in the *cakra*. As soon as it is manifested, the mind is focussed upon it. There is thus no scope for imagination (*bhāvanā* or *kalpanā*).[115] Vijayakṛṣṇa did not recommend any voluntary act on the part of the imagination towards creating an object of *dhyāna* (*kalpita-dhyāna*). He insisted on *nāma-japa* which would lead to the manifestation of form (*rūpa*), comprising the infinite number of appearances in which God's immanence is manifested. With the glory of God thus spontaneously revealing itself, the natural response of the *sādhaka* to it is *dhyāna* which follows automatically. But in case a form becomes necessary for the purpose of meditation, the figure of the *guru* may be taken as an object: *dhyāna-mūlaṁ gurormūrtiḥ*.

(8) *Ekāgratā* :

Practice of concentration (*ekāgratā*), as an essential aid to *sādhanā*, is of different kinds. The practices which are usually resorted to, for secur-

115. S.S., III. p. 129.

ing concentration, yield a desirable result that is only occasional in nature and which does not render any permanent help. The stability and steadiness of the mind, under these practices, persists only so long as the practices continue. These are, by their very nature, external means, and the stability secured through them is partial and short-lived. Genuine and durable concentration is possible only when the mind is free from its wanderings, (*saṁkalpa-vikalpa*). The best way to attain concentration is never to lose sight of the fact, and never allow the weakening of the conviction, that God exists and is immanent.

Smaraṇa, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana* are the most efficacious methods of concentration. *Smaraṇa* consists in cultivating the habit of remembering God at every place and in all circumstances. *Manana* is the spontaneous fixing of attention on His omnipresence as soon as it is realised. Once the universal presence of God is realised, the mind becomes fixed upon it. It can then never be deflected. *Nididhyāsana* is a perpetual enjoyment through repetition and recapitulation of what has been attained through the earlier two processes.

To secure the stability of the mind, the *sādhaka* is required to exercise a strict control over the function of his mind. Lack of such control is generally due to the vagaries of the two senses which are ordinarily very strong, viz., the palate and the genital organ. One should therefore be on one's guard lest these two should foil the

attempts at gaining mental steadiness. Besides good society (*satsaṅga*), a spirit of constant discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal (*nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka*)—which amounts to a meditation on the unreality of the world, and a systematic devotion to silent *japa* of the Lord's Name — also helps to a great extent in the attainment of mental quietude.[116]

(9) *Samādhi* :

Mental steadiness and concentration are associated with the superconscious state, in which all distinction between subject and object is lost and in which the One Self is realised, the state which is commonly known as *samādhi*. *Samādhi* is of two kinds : (*a*) *vigarbha* and (*b*) *sagarbha*. They are explained as follows :

(*a*) *Vigarbha samādhi* :

It is the result of the stability and strength of the body as well as the control over the vital currents. It has nevertheless no value from the spiritual point of view. Even magicians can demonstrate it through the practice of *kumbhaka*, as a part of their magic. The *samādhi* which is based upon *kumbhaka* and the other *haṭha-yogic* processes is of this kind.

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116. S.S., V. pp. 114-115.

(*b*) *Sagarbha samādhi* :

True *samādhi,* however, is the *sagarbha* one. It is accompanied by or based upon thoughts on Divinity; the link between the two is vital and unbreakable. Devotees who aspire after union with God shun all forms of powers, as not conducive to their chosen end. Powers of themselves come to them, but they never hanker after them. For a seeker after true union (*yoga*), what is most essential is always to keep up *brahmacarya. Brahmacarya* depends on truthfulness (*satya*), which can be attained through restraint of speech.[117]

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Vijaykṛṣṇa on Nāma-sādhanā :

As we have already mentioned above, in regard to the path to be followed by the *sādhaka,* Vijaya-kṛṣṇa lays great stress on taking God's Name at every breath, accompanied by *prāṇāyāma.* In the earlier stage of the *sādhanā,* he adds, attention is to be fixed upon the control of breathing. As a result of this, in due course, the acquaintance with, and a control upon, the flow of the vital breath within the spinal cord takes place. When this happens,

117. S.S., III. pp. 161-162.

nāma-japa must be added to the concentration upon the repetition of the Divine Name, together with *prāṇāyāma*, and should be continued at least for half an hour. During the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, Vijayakṛṣṇa prohibits the postures of lying, standing, or walking. He approves only of the sitting posture, and that, too, for a fixed period of time, preferably during the latter part of the night. It is desirable, he says, to practice *prāṇāyāma* for half an hour in the beginning, and then increase it gradually. If even half an hour is considered too much in an individual's case, an intermittent practice of it is recommended. During *prāṇāyāma*, the mouth may remain open or closed. But *nāma-japa* should never be stopped. No sound emanating from the practice of *prāṇāyāma* should be audible to others lest it might harm them. *Prāṇāyāma* is forbidden in the presence of children. The practice should be kept secret. Ritual impurities (*aśauca*) of any kind are not conducive to a successful practice of *prāṇāyāma*. It is not to be practised when one feels hungry, or when there is wind in the stomach, or headache, or any other physical illness. The practice of the posture called *yoni-mudrā* is very difficult indeed. It is strictly forbidden until a perfect control of the breathing process (*kumbhaka*) has been attained. A successful practice of *prāṇāyāma*, carried on under a competent guide, results in improvement of bodily health, removal of the unrest of the senses, stability of mind, development of the power of soaring through space, attainment of Supreme Knowledge (*divya-jñāna*), and Supreme Vision (*divya-dṛṣṭi*). A further result is

purification of the blood and better circulation of it in the bodily system. The repetition of the Holy Name, in the final process, becomes harmonised with the circulation of blood, producing thereby its revolutionary effect on every tissue of the body, which becomes permeated with the energy embodied in the Holy Name. Under this impact there begins a process of transformation of the human body, as a result of which it becomes pure in nature (*sāttvika*) and capable of generating and inspiring pure activities.[118] The effect of *nāma-sādhanā* is visible outside in the form of circular marks on the back of fingers, and it also appears sometimes in bones, flesh, and blood.[119]

The blessings of the practice of devotedly repeating *nāma* are said to be innumerable, comprising, besides concentration of the mind, attainment of an infinite kingdom of beatitude, glorious forms, *bhāvas*, and the living enjoyment of the Divine *Līlā*.[120]

True realisation (*siddhi*) is not a mere acquisition of some powers but the attainment of a state in which every organ of the body sings the glory of the Divine Name in a ceaseless chorus of hymns. This is possible only when desires are removed from the mind. An unspeakable relish (*ruci*) in *nāma* follows this condition.[121]

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118. S.S., III. p. 18.
119. S.S., III. pp. 18-19.
120. S.S., III. p. 129.
121. S.S., III. p. 180.

The Practice of Nāma-japa :

Nāma-japa requires steadiness combined with attentiveness. The Divine Name, in its essence, is not an audible sound expressed through mere letters, but a spark of the Divine Light, carrying in it the illimitable omnipotence of God. It awakens in the heart an ever-rising feeling of love, devotion, and purity. The Name of God being identical with God Himself, the repetition of the Name with devotion amounts virtually to Divine Communion (*bhagavatsaṅga*).[122] The potency of God's Name is so great that it can manifest the Divine, provided that the *sādhaka* has simplicity, the innocence of a child, and faith in God. Just as a child in trouble cries for its mother, on whom its reliance is absolute, in the same manner, a true devotee practices the repetition of God's Name, with implicit faith in the Divine.[123]

The process of *japa*, continued with concentration for a long time, produces a wonderful effect not only in the mind and spirit, but even on the physical body itself, so that in exceptional cases, as an effect of this practice, the body is converted as it were into a lump of flesh, with all its organs drawn back within itself, just as it happens in a tortoise (*kūrmaiva*). Sometimes it so happens that as an effect of the concentrated action of *japa*, different

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122. S.S., III. p. 239.
123. S.S., V. p. 214.

limbs of the body are torn off and separated from the trunk, to be reassembled and refitted later. So, one who knows the mysteries of this process, usually after this condition rests and relaxes for awhile, and then he returns to his normal position. These extraordinary effects were actually noticed in the *sādhaka*-life of Vijayakṛṣṇa himself. Another important effect of this practice is the generation of intense heat in the body.[124]

Besides what has been said above, the most important effect of the practice of *nāma-sādhanā* is the destruction of *prārabdha karma*, *i.e.*, the *kārmic* force which is responsible for the origin of this body, as well as the experience of pleasures and pains possible through this body. This force is by its very nature indestructible in all creatures, and has to be grappled with and tackled through proper experiences. As a rule, no amount of personal effort made by an ordinary *sādhaka* in the course of his *sādhanā* is capable of destroying or even modifying it. The practice of *nāma-sādhanā* and *nāma-japa,* however, is expectionally potent in regard to its destructive action on *prārabdha*.[125]

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124. When due to intense heat the limbs of the body are drawn inwards, there arises a critical state in *yoga* called *yoga-saṁkaṭa*. The crisis, however, has a wonderful cathartic effect upon the *sādhaka*. Vijayakṛṣṇa recommends certain remedies during this state, lest there should be a breakdown in the *sādhaka*'s path of quest. S.S., V. p. 176.

125. S.S., III. p. 245.

It is a common experience with people who are regular and devoted practitioners of *nāma-sādhanā* that, at the outset, they feel a sort of spiritual dryness and aridity. This is a normal feature in this *sādhanā*, and has to be counteracted by steady perseverance. If this continuity is maintained for a fairly long time, it has the effect of transforming the body to such an extent that every drop of the blood, nay, every iota of the organic matter in the body, becomes vibrant with the Holy Name. When this happens, the body must be covered with a piece of cloth or smeared with ashes.[126]

Rules for the Practice of the Name :

The practice of repeating the Holy Name should conform, as far as possible, to the following rules :

(*i*) Everything prejudicial or offensive to the Holy Name (*nāmāparādha*) should be strictly avoided during the practice.

(*ii*) The qualities of meekness, patience, and reverence should be cultivated.

(*iii*) The practice should be repeated everyday, even if it be for a short time. The best time for such practice is in the early hours of morning, three hours after sunrise, midday, and at the time of sunset.

126. S.S., II. p. 153; IV. pp. 200-201.

(*iv*) There should be no consideration made about the probable pleasure resulting from the practice, which has to be continued regardless of any extraneous consideration.[127]

True Sannyāsa versus Householder's Life (Gṛhastha-āśrama) :

Success in *sādhanā* is the badge of an accredited *sannyāsin*, according to Vijayakṛṣṇa. The true *sannyāsin* is not an empty form. He represents, on the other hand, a state of the human soul in which he has absolutely surrendered to God. Even the householder, in the midst of his diverse and distracting worldly activities, and without taking recourse to formal *sannyāsa,* may attain a state of the wise one or the seer (*paramahaṁsa*). What is really needed for such an attainment is the destruction of *karma*, *prārabdha* or otherwise. This may be achieved after renunciation, or it may also be achieved within the world itself through legitimate means, and especially through the sincere and unceasing love of and devotion to God.

The chains which bind us to the material world of the flesh (*saṁsāra*), and within which we are spiritually dwarfed, do not consist of the property and worldly possessions that are commonly considered as the bane of the spiritual life. On the other hand, the most persistent and difficult chains are our false

127. S.S., V. pp. 136, 294.

egoism, megalomania, and blurred vision, owing to which we mistake the body for the soul. Therefore, real detachment is needed, after which *karma* disappears of itself. Forcible renunciation, with the desires still lurking within us, is useless. The best way of destroying *karma* is to perform it with complete non-involvement and detachment, with the mind and heart fixed upon the glory of God, and the dedicated quest for it.

8

Vijayakṛṣṇa on the Ego-sense :

Vijayakṛṣṇa's teachings, of which an account has been given in the foregoing pages, with all their practical bias and basis in his personal experiences, give a great priority to self-purification as the first step in *sādhanā*. This step, as it is but natural, emphasises the neutralisation of the ego-sense in man. When the ego is gone, the soul cannot really distinguish between heat and cold, honour and dishonour; because with the destruction of ego, the soul is linked with God so that its pleasures and pains are all transferred to the Divine, who is equally present in everything and to whom these worldly distinctions do not matter at all. Through His Grace, a *bhakta* is elevated above all these experiences; he, in the glory of his newly-achieved freedom, can easily overcome all mundane limitations at his own will.[128]

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128. S.S., III. p. 40.

Egoism can be bred even by religion ; and everybody should be forewarned that the egoism which grows under the shadow of religion is the worst enemy of man. It is difficult to believe, but the ego-sense may be fed also by *sādhana, bhajana,* penances, etc. The way in which a man speaks, and the clothes he puts on, may also tend towards raising the ego-sense in him.[129] Any action which is likely to inflate the egoistic sense should be rejected as poison. The worst form of egoism is the one which emanates from the consciousness of one's superiority in matters of spiritual development.[130]

There are, however, two egos: a lower one and a higher one — the former detrimental to any true spiritual quest, and the latter conducive to it. The lower ego, the product of our involvement in passions and predispositions, pulls us down to the earth. This is what has to be rejected. The higher ego which comes in the wake of an active and dedicated spiritual quest, is the one which is roused into vigorous activity, due to the potent influence of *guru-śakti.*[131]

The greatest impediment on the path of spiritual improvement is the egoistic sense, and it is so tough that it cannot be easily destroyed. It persists until absolute liberation from the worldly shackles is attained. We have it on record that even great *yogins* have slipped and foundered owing to the machina-

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129. S.S., III. p. 216.
130. S.S., IV. pp. 204-205.
131. S.S., V. p. 195.

tion of the ego over petty matters. Humility, meekness, and the sense of lowliness, which prove that the overweening ego has been subjugated, are of great help in the path of *sādhanā*.[132]

The ego-sense, which expresses itself through the sense of possession, is inspired by what we possess by way of wealth or learning or status. This particular ego-sense can be easily removed. But there is a type of malice and repulsion caused by conceit (*abhimāna*), and bringing about another type of egoistic manifestation which is very obstinate. As examples we may cite the case of the poor man who labours under the notion that the rich man hates him, and who on this ground feels disrespectful about the rich man ; or the illiterate and the sinful, who entertains similar feelings towards the learned and the pious. In both the cases, the passion insidiously goes to augment the egoistic impulse in man. The importance of the liberation from ego can be realised from the fact that even persons who have received guidance from *sadgurus* cannot become the receptacles of divine mercy, until they feel it in the most intense manner that they are absolutely helpless and poor, *i.e.*, when the ego has been deprived of its poisonous fang. Those who are poor and weak are only the object of pity and compassion; those who are bloated with a sense of their own importance deserve little sympathy.[133]

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132. S.S., III. p. 64.
133. S.S., III. p. 99.

The Jīvātman or the Individual Self :

The pure ego is known as *jīvātman*. In its embodied condition it is like the burning light within a dome of glass. The seminal fire which keeps alive the flame is the Supreme *Brahman*, which is absolute consciousness. The fire of *Brahman* burns, as it were, through the wick of *jīvātman*, and emits a light which spreads out through the fragile glass case. This fire or light as the essence of all light in the universe, lies embedded in the sun, the moon, the lightning, and all the other things that are bright and beaming. This light is thus the epitome of all energy and of universal life (*prāṇa*). *Jīvātman* is multiple, there being billions of *jīvas*; but in the midst of this plurality, there is a bond of unity in nature. Every *jīva* is by nature similar in so far as knowledge, love, will, etc., commonly constitute his essential character. He feels glorified in a freedom which is a gift from the Creator, and is virtually synonymous with an absolute dependence upon the Creator.[134]

Freedom of Will :

There is just a little freedom given to the human will. This means that man is, to a very small extent, a free agent and is not a mere automaton. But of uncharted freedom, he has none. Whatever little freedom

134. A.U., pp. 6, 9-10.

he has got is put under limitation and restriction. Vijayakṛṣṇa's illustration of this point, found in his teachings, is of a cow tethered to a post with a long rope. Every man considers himself an agent, experiencing pleasure or pain, albeit under the clutches of ignorance. He has a definite spiritual mission in his life, for the fulfilment of which a certain amount of freedom is necessary; and this has been given to him. The rest is limitation and dependence. The limitation, however, disappears with his spiritual evolution; and the more it disappears, the more angelic and divine he becomes. Man is a spiritual monad. When he becomes free, he is *Śiva, i.e.*, fully identified with the Divine.[135]

So we see again Vijayakṛṣṇa's spiritual light in all its pellucid clarity, in his examination of the nature of the human ego and the related question of the extent to which the human will enjoys liberty. The essence of his ideas comes from his assimilation and absorption of the scriptures, supported by his personal experiences and realisations. His originality lies in the freshness with which he imbues his teachings and their almost phenomenal clarity, completely free as they are from the subtleties of esoteric philosophy.

Vijayakṛṣṇa's emphasis on the neutralisation of the human ego clearly shows his reliance on the path of love and devotion (*bhakti*), and not of knowledge (*jñāna*). At the same time, his emphasis on individual effort as a supplement to devotion, to be seen in

135. S.S., V. pp. 111-112.

his twofold categorisation of the ego, shows how he synthesises the two diverse approaches, even though the maximum weight falls upon *bhakti*. Echoes of the Bible and of Neoplatonism are also, interestingly enough, heard in his teachings. When he says that the humble and weak will be granted God's mercy, of which the high and mighty will be deprived, we are reminded of the Biblical parable of Lazarus and Dives (N.T., Luke, 16-17; John, 11, 12). Similarly, when he brings in the beautiful image of the light burning in a glass dome and being fed by the Light, explaining thus the relation between *jīvātman* and *Brahman,* the Neoplatonic ideas float before us — especially Shelley's imagery in his *Adonais*, of life seen as a dome of many-coloured glass staining the white radiance of eternity.

At the top of everything, all that Vijayakṛṣṇa says in the above context cannot but be a rich store of wisdom about both the conceptual and the practical aspects of the mystic path. His experience and advice cannot but be the most reliable *vade mecum* for anybody inspired towards the pursuit of the mystic path of *sādhanā*.

9

Vijayakṛṣṇa on the Doctrine of Karma :

Vijayakṛṣṇa had a firm faith in the doctrine of *karma*. Much of his teaching deals with *karma* and the light in which he sees it. To him, the *karma* of a spiritually unregenerate man falls under three heads,

viz., *kriyamāṇa* or *vartamāṇa*, *sañcita*, and *prārabdha*. He further says that *karma* implies moral responsibility, and hence none but a human being is entitled to *karma*. The nature of the entire subhuman creation and, even, its evolutionary scheme are not governed by the concept of *karma*, simply because those who belong to this order do not have any moral responsibility to govern their action. But as soon as the soul, in the course of its evolution, arrives at the human level, it becomes a moral agent, inasmuch as it identifies itself as a distinct ego with the body and the mind and their manifold activities. But it is at this point that the soul commonly undergoes a change. It is evidently due to an apparently inexplicable confusion in its outlook that it fails to make a proper discrimination between itself on one side, and the mind, the body, and their activities, which are nothing but the vehicles of the soul, on the other.

The actual *karma*, *i.e.*, the action done in the present birth is known as *kriyamāṇa*. The past ones, the actions already done, the experience of which lies accumulated in the subconscious regions of the system[136] waiting for fruition, are known as *sañcita*. A portion of this accumulated *karma* which is mature and begins to bear fruit is called *prārabdha*. According to the *śāstras*, the *prārabdhas* determine the next physical birth of the person, inclusive of the term of life and the shape of the things to come—the painful or pleasant experiences involved in the assumption

136. S.S., V. p. 93.

of the particular kind of body obtained in this term. In respect of all this, Vijayakṛṣṇa's views of *karma* are consistent with the traditional views, according to which, additionally, the direct knowledge of Self or *Brahman* brings about the destruction of the accumulated *karmas*, and enables the individual self (*jīvātman*), rendered free from the egoistic pull under the influence of Self-knowledge, to be free and immune from all attachment to the *kriyamāṇa karma*. The *prārabdha* alone, however, remains, justifying itself by producing the relevant fruits.

Methods for Counteracting Prārabdha Karma :

Vijayakṛṣṇa emphasises that the sanctity of *prārabdha* is an undeniable fact, so that there is under ordinary circumstances no escape from its effects, even for a *jīvanmukta*. There is no doubt that there do exist methods for counteracting *prārabdha*. Some of these methods find a fair amount of elaboration in his teachings, evidently intended for the edification of his admirers or favourite disciples. Of these methods the following may be considered important :

(*a*) The practice of the dedicated repetition of the Divine Name, called *nāma-sādhanā*, has the effect of disintegrating *prārabdha*.[137] This practice

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137. The inflexible and persistent character of *prārabdha* is pointed out in all the systems of Indian thought. Nevertheless there are definite evidences also in the *śāstras* showing that there are certain very potent but exceptional means by which one

requires the actual utterance of the Holy Name in every breath.

(*b*) The practice of what is known in the scriptures as *ajapā* comes next. This is more or less identical in essence with the previous practice, excepting that in its purest condition, it is a natural process, while the previous one may be either voluntary or spontaneous.[138]

(*c*) Every action performed (including the normal activity of everyday life) in a disinterested manner or with an eye to the propitiation of the Lord, has also a similar purgative effect.

(*d*) A spirit of constant self-analysis and self-introspection (*vicāra*) is again conducive to a release from the burden of *prārabdha*.[139]

(*e*) Remorse, repentance, and confession, if sincerely done, lead to the above liberation.[140]

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may either escape from or counteract its influence. That *yoga* can conquer *prārabdha* is a truth which none can deny. Vidyāraṇya Svāmī refers to *Yoga-vāśiṣṭha* in this connection and points out the instances of Uddālaka and Vithihavya there, as men who reached the goal along this path. (See *Jīvanmukti-viveka*). That *bhakti* is also capable of effecting this miracle is evident from the epithet : *bhakta-prārabdha-vidhvaṁśī* applied to God (*Bhagavān*). That *prārabdha* if not so intense in character can be modified by certain expiatory *karma* enjoined in the Hindu scriptures is also a recognised fact.

138. S.S., I. p. 97.
139. S.S., I. p. 97.
140. S.S., III. p. 28.

(*f*) Action of *guru-śakti*, *i.e.*, the potent and completely regenerative influence of the *sadguru* on the disciple, along with his grace, has the effect of complete liberation upon the disciple.

It should be clear from this that in ordinary circumstances it is very difficult to stem the current of *prārabdha*. No spiritual practice, howsoever well meant and strictly performed, is competent to help one in fully transcending the inexorable course of *prārabdha*. Regarding this, Vijayakṛṣṇa cites with evident relevance the example of Lokanātha Brahmacārin, who, through his supreme *yogic* effort, succeeded in going beyond even the 'fourth stage' [141] of spiritual development, and attained a state verging on *nirvikalpa samādhi*. But from this height he was dragged down by the same *prārabdha* which he claimed to have vanquished.

The foregoing description of *karma* applies to the moral activities of an unregenerate man. In the philosophical literature it is this conception of *karma* which is generally expounded and explicated, with the condition that the liberated man is he who has freed himself from the entanglements of *karma*. But Vijaya-

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141. S.S., I. p. 97.

It is not very clear, as we see, what is exactly Vijayakṛṣṇa's purport in this passage. The 'fourth stage' referred to by him may probably be the fourth *jñāna-bhūmi* described in *Yoga-vāśiṣṭha* or the fourth *bhūmi* recognised by the *siddhas* (cf. *The Life of Kāṭhiyā Bābā* by Santadāsa Bābājī, pp. 212-214). In any case, from the context it seems that it represents the state of *savikalpa jñāna*, with the near prospect of attaining *nirvikalpa jñāna*.

kṛṣṇa observes that the true *karma* of a man begins only when what is commonly called *karma* has come to an end. In other words, a man who has got rid of ignorance (*avidyā*), and has risen above the implications of moral existence, attains a state of freedom from matter and the contaminations of the unregenerated self. He alone is really capable of exerting himself for the good of all. According to Vijayakṛṣṇa this exertion is what constitutes the purest and the best *karma*, the divine *karma* or selfless service, born of universal love.[142]

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142. S.S., III. p. 28.

We are afraid that Vijayakṛṣṇa's view of the higher form of *karma*, as explained above, might not be acceptable to many. But to them it should be pointed out that Vijayakṛṣṇa's view has undoubtedly the support of the best tradition of India, in fact, the tradition of all systems of spiritual culture. Vijayakṛṣṇa clearly says that the true *karma* begins with *jīvanmukti*, because before the manifestation of *jīvanmukti*, every *karma* is stigmatised by ignorance and by the taint of selfishness. Any selfless endeavour towards the well-being of others is possible only when a man has attained to a condition in which he has nothing to gain for his own self, *i.e.*, a state in which his nature has been completely divinised. Vyāsadeva, we remember, in his commentary on *Yoga-sūtra* (I. 25) says of God that though He has no selfish ends to serve, He continues to work with the sole object of doing good to all creatures : *tasya ātmānugrahābhāve'pi bhūtānugraha eva prayojanam*. The *Gītā* (III. 22.) also has the same idea. It says :

na me pārthāsti kartavyaṁ triṣu lokeṣu kiñcana.
nānavāptamavāptavyaṁ varta eva ca karmāṇi ..

Buddhist, Tāntrika, and other works on Indian mysticism or spiritual *sādhanā*, as well as the Christian and the Islāmic ones, and

Vijayakṛṣṇa's Further Views on the Doctrine of Karma :

Vijayakṛṣṇa's interpretation of the theory of *karma* leads him to say further that the course of action laid down in the holy *śāstras,* as to the methods of liberation from *karma,* should be strictly followed. If these were followed, there would dawn upon man the occasional flashes of discrimination (*viveka*) and detachment (*vairāgya*). A desire for action for its own sake, and without any desire for personal reward (*niṣkāma karma*), would then follow. Actions performed with a spirit of detachment would bring *karma* to an end. With the liberation from *karma,* faith alone would reign in the heart.[143]

From the above description, it is clear that true detachment cannot be attained until *karma* has been exhausted. Hence the practice of taking formal renunciation (*sannyāsa*) has hardly any worth or justification. As to how *karma* can be quickly brought to

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other works on the kindred subject, bear testimony to the same truth. Vidyāraṇya has also a more or less similar conception of *jīvanmukti*, in so far as he points out that the chief justification of a *jīvanmukta*'s existence, from the standpoint of social life, is that it is by a *jīvanmukta* alone that the Divine Wisdom is transmitted through a proper channel to posterity (*Jīvanmukti-viveka*, Chapter IV). The treasures of Divine Love are in the possession of a *jīvanmukta* who is their accredited custodian. Had there been no *jīvanmukti*, the realisation and wisdom of every sage would have disappeared with him, and there could not have been any good to the world at large.

143. S.S., V. p. 220.

an end, Vijayakṛṣṇa says that the easiest way is to apply oneself to *karma* with the exclusive idea of securing the divine approval and grace.[144]

The possibility of fresh *karma* does not depend on the soul. *Karma* is really nothing else but an expression of our desires (*vāsanā*) and predispositions (*saṁskāra*). Hence even when the soul is absolutely dependent upon God, the desires which arise in it, and which is difficult to prevent, constitute its fetters. These fetters, translated into actions, are *karmas*.[145]

The ancient scriptures prescribe certain remedial actions for particular persons, under particular circumstances. The actions aim at exhausting the enjoyment or fruition (*bhoga*) already due to a man. The scriptures further point out that in the path leading to desireless emancipation (*niṣkāma mukti*), the seeker is tested by different agencies, human as well as superhuman, through tempting offers and other ordeals of a similar nature. To get rid of these difficulties, the only way is to be completely free from desires, and to have a serene and unbroken concentration on the ideal of emancipation. The cessation of *karma* is thus really the removal of the attachment to it. Enjoyment permissible according to the *śāstras*, the nature of which depends upon the nature of every individual being, aims at the destruction of *karma*. All such enjoyment is ultimately helpful and is, there-

144. S.S., III. p. 121.
145. S.S., III. p. 121.

fore, sanctioned. By merely reading the scriptures, it is very difficult to determine the exact nature of this enjoyment, because the nature of the enjoyment depends upon the nature of the individual, which by its very character is unpredictable. But all such natural actions are altogether destructive of the spirit of egoistic enjoyment (*bhoga*).

It is thus evident that the human nature is to be known, before it is possible to arrange for the necessary remedial *karma*. As a study of scriptures is not enough to provide this knowledge, the aid and advice from a *sadguru* who has a clear insight into human nature, and is thus capable of prescribing the appropriate *karma*, become indispensable. For a disciple it is imperative that he should follow the *guru*'s instructions fully and implicitly. It is in this way that the life of *karma* is brought to an end.[146] The remedial *karma*, which is conducive to *dharma*, is virtue and is the negation of vice.[147] The transcendent or the highest state conceivable beyond action (*dharma* and *karma*), is a distant prospect, but by no means unreachable. Renunciation (*vairāgya*) is only a detachment of the senses from the object pursued; it is not the eradication of *karma*. If any *karma* is

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146. S.S., II. pp. 73-74.

147. Elsewhere Vijayakṛṣṇa notes that the standard of an action is always relative, because what is virtue in one state may be a vice in another and *vice versa*. The action which destroys and tends to destroy spiritual consciousness is vice (*pāpa*) and its opposite is virtue (*puṇya*). S.S., V. p. 190.

left in a man, it is bound to assert itself sooner or later. Strange as it may appear, *karma* alone is a means to *vairāgya*, though it generally presumes to end *karma*. However, it is through Divine Grace alone that we can hope to achieve a genuine liberation, and that too in a moment.[148]

No fresh *karma* is possible after one has been fortunate enough to get the protective shelter of a *sadguru*. Even a so-called wrong action cannot bind down a man or have evil consequences for him, once he is under the protection of a *sadguru*.[149]

Vijayakṛṣṇa on Human Suffering and Its Duration :

The widely accepted Indian religio-ethical view is that human suffering will continue so long as a man is not liberated from the action of the three *guṇas*, and that when a man transcends the *guṇas*, he is above sorrow and suffering. In this connection, Vijayakṛṣna says that the worldly sorrows do disappear with liberation (*mukti*), for they are the effects of the *guṇas*. But there is a higher suffering which persists even after *mokṣa*. It continues as long as the sense of agency persists. This higher suffering is in fact caused by the delay in getting the God-vision by a soul intensely yearning for it. A person who is truly liberated, likewise, does not give up

148. S.S., II. pp. 86-87.
149. S.S., III. p. 17.

karma. He performs every action in a way that is distinguished by childlike innocence and simplicity. He does not even know why he acts, though act he must. He remains free from the sense of agency within, but still pursues his actions from without. This is the sign of a great soul, the distinguishing mark of an elevated devotee, the badge of the wise is true to the kindred points of heaven and home. He is hence called the *yukta-bhakta* and not a mere *mukta-bhakta*. If anybody deserves a freedom from suffering, it is surely he.[150]

10

Vijayakṛṣṇa on Bhāva, Its Origin, and Changes :

Vijayakṛṣṇa quite understandably concentrates upon a comparative examination of the relative merits of devotion (*bhakti*) and knowledge (*jñāna*), in the course of which he has something very original and refreshing to say about the elevated state of rapture (*bhāva*), which is a concomitant of *bhakti*, and which is invested with a tremendous importance in all the Vaiṣṇava theological and philosophical works. There is no inherent contradiction, he says, between *bhāva* and *jñāna*, as is usually supposed by the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal. *Bhāva* is not mere sentiment. It is a rare gift, even the faintest germ of which has a revolutionary effect upon the human mind, producing

150. S.S., V. p. 137.

in it the following changes in the direction of making it a receptacle of genuine virtues :

(*a*) *Kṣānti* :

It is the twofold virtue of patience and forgiveness, even under the gravest provocation.

(*b*) *Avyarthakālatvam* :

It is the virtue of refraining from waste of time, and of devoting oneself always to some such activity as is conducive to the spiritual welfare and improvement of the self.

(*c*) *Virakti* :

It is the virtue of detachment from all worldly pursuits.

(*d*) *Mānaśūnyatā* :

It is the virtue of freedom from pride, conceit, and egoism.

(*e*) *Āśābandhasamutkaṇṭhatā* :

It is the virtue of a firm faith in Divine Grace, and in the final success of the spiritual quest.

(*f*) *Nāmagāne sadāruci* :

It is desire for singing always the glories of Divine Name.

(*g*) *Āsaktistadguṇākhyāne* :

It is passion for singing the praise of the noble and gracious qualities of God.

(*h*) *Prītistadvasatisthale* :

It is the virtue of love for the dwelling place (*e.g.*, the temple) of the Divine Image, or better still, for the entire creation in which God manifests Himself.

These are some of the important symptoms which appear on the first emergence of even the faintest trace of *bhāva* in the devotee. The origin of *bhāva*, on that part, follows the following order :

(*i*) *Śraddhā*, *i.e.*, faith in the *śāstras* and in what righteous people do.

(*ii*) *Sādhusaṅga, i.e.*, the cultivation of good society. This cultivation aims at a direct knowledge of the saints' mode of life and the development of an aspiration for such a life.

(*iii*) *Bhajanakriyā*, *i.e.*, the pursuit of devotional practices.

(*iv*) *Anarthanivṛtti*, *i.e.*, the removal of all unfavourable elements from one's nature. This amounts to an elimination of evil from one's own life.

(*v*) *Niṣṭhā*, *i.e.*, the practice of a devotion of the positive nature.

(*vi*) *Ruci*, *i.e.*, the development of a taste or liking based upon one's devotion.

(*vii*) *Āsakti*, *i.e.*, the development of an attachment to God and everything divine.

(*viii*) *Bhāva, i.e.*, the development of the feeling of undiluted love and devotion in the heart.

Vijayakṛṣṇa on Bhāva Developing into Bhakti; Bhakti and Its Kinds :

It will appear from what has been said above that the origin of *bhāva* follows a very complex psychological process — a process which revolutionises the mental faculty completely. *Bhāva*, on its part matures into *bhakti* and *bhakti* finally consummates into *prema* or Divine Love.

The external physical and emotional symptoms of *bhāva* (*sāttvika vikāra*) are tears, trembling or quivering of the body, or horripilation and sweating. These are, as a rule, indications of an inner revolution going on and a new dawn emerging, but not always, because even without any *bhāva*, some of these physical symptoms may appear in certain cases. It is also to be remembered that tears flow along different tracks under the ascendancy of the different types of *bhāva*; and the taste of these fluids differs from one another, according to the typical nature of the seminal *bhāva*. It may also be noted that the above symptoms may be brought under control and restrained through practice and discipline.[151]

Bhakti is God's free gift to the pure, meek, and innocent. It is of two kinds :

(*i*) that which flows from the heart from a sense of duty (*vaidhi-bhakti*), and (*ii*) that which gushes out in endless stream without any con-

151. S.S., III. pp. 153-155.

sideration of duty or propriety (*ahaitukī-bhakti*). The former again is of four kinds (according to the nature of the urge leading the devotee on), the four being termed as (*a*) *ārta,* (*b*) *arthārthī* (*c*) *jijñāsu,* and (*d*) *jñānin.* True *ārta bhakti,* according to Vijayakṛṣṇa, consists of a complete resignation to and dependence upon the power inherent in God's Name, with suffering in the midst of dryness, sin, and lack of faith characterising the human world. Even when all these troubles oppress the heart and when a crippling sense of despair paralyses the mind, the devotee (*bhakta*), like one who has lost everything and has been set adrift like a rudderless boat, looks up to Him in obeisance and prayer, submitting that He alone can save him. In the Divine Name the potency is indeed great. When uttered in such a mood, it softens even the most ruthless of hearts. Divine Name produces its own effect even when the heart is dry and lacks in true faith. A bitter medicine swallowed unwillingly does not fail to show its curative virtues. The Name of God is a sure means to the deliverance of the sinner.[152]

Faith in God and a keen desire for chanting God's Name (*bhajana*) arise under the ameliorative action of the extraordinary merit of a man's previous lives. This merit is gained from the following deeds :

(*a*) A systematic and dedicated study of the devotional (*bhakti*) literature.

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152. S.S., IV. pp. 173-174.

(*b*) The unceasing cultivation of virtuous society.

(*c*) An intense desire for worshipping and praying to God.

All the above factors constitute a necessary precondition for securing *dīkṣā* from a *sadguru*.[153]

Bhakti as an outcome of faith commences when *karma* comes to an end, and the termination of *karma*, however, is dependent upon the capacity for a regular discharge of *niṣkāma karma*. Even absolute devotion to God (*aikāntikī-haribhakti*) should be a matter of self-determination, a path in which a devotee should deliberately keep himself strictly regulated according to the rules and injunctions laid down in the scriptures, especially in the *Pāñcarātra* literature. Else, it is, at least in certain cases, liable to prove a source of trouble and a curse.[154]

Bhakti, as has already been said, and as Vijayakṛṣṇa repeats so often, is not obtained through efforts. It descends on the soul without any apparent cause. It does not arise from discrimination, but very often comes fortuitously. It is indeed a very valuable treasure and ought to be guarded as one's best possession. The more it is repressed, the greater is its intensity. And in this respect the devotee needs to be very careful. Its very intensity may prove to be a snare to him. It may possibly awaken his

153. S.S., IV. p. 188.
154. S.S., V. p. 220.

perversity and his egoism, and may lead him to self-advertisement. This must always be guarded against.[155]

Vijayakṛṣṇa on the Nature of God :

According to Vijayakṛṣṇa, God is both without form (*nirākāra*) and with a form (*sākāra*). The entire universe, including the animate and the inanimate creation, emanated from the self-motivated and omnipotent Supreme *Brahman*. The Creator is thus above His creation; He can be classified neither as material nor as immaterial. He is unique, incomparable and self-sufficient. As the Supreme Omnipotence and Omnipresence, He is indescribable. Hence He is called *nirākāra*. The word '*nirākāra*' certainly does not imply a mere void. God has, indeed, a Form which is eternal and is of the nature of *Saccidānanda*. Until a man has been fortunate enough to secure a vision of this Eternal Form through the eye of knowledge (*jñāna*) or devotion (*bhakti*), it is idle and useless to describe Him either as *sākāra* or *nirākāra*. The sweetness and beauty, the truth and purity, of Divine Form can never be described in human language.[156]

God is, according to Vijayakṛṣṇa, *puruṣa* as well as *prakṛti*. He is, in fact, a synthesis of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. In other words, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, considered as one, constitutes the essence of God. This is practically the significance of the *Vaiṣṇava* cult of

155. A.U., pp. 45, 86-87 ; S.S., V. 72.
156. A.U., p. 45, 86-87.

Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, the essence of which lies in the above conception of the Divine.[157] Just as fire and the power of its burning are not two distinct entities, but represent One Integral Whole, in the same way *Rādhā* and *Kṛṣṇa*, standing for *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* respectively, represent a unitive substance, viz., God in all His divine plenitude.[158]

Vijayakṛṣṇa on Avatāra :

Vijayakṛṣṇa's views on *avatāra* seem to have been based on those of the Bengal School of Vaiṣṇavism. *Avatāra* is defined as the descent of Divine Power in a particular person, for a definite purpose, and on a specific occasion. As soon as the purpose is served, the Power disappears from the person, who is then no longer to be looked upon as an *avatāra* as before. This descent, thus, may be temporary, lasting for a short time; or it may be permanent, lasting till the end of life. Paraśurāma and Rāmacandra are the classical examples of the advent of *avatāras* upon the earth. There are various types of *avatāra*, considered from the standpoint of the degree of power manifested in the *avatāra*, *e.g.*, *aṁśa, kalā*, etc., or the nature of manifestation, *e.g.*, *āvirbhāva, āveśa*, etc. Thus Vijayakṛṣṇa's views on *avatāra* are fundamentally in agreement with the ancient Hindu scriptures. The *avatāra* is the incarnation of God, the medium through which His Righteousness triumphs in the world in

157. A.U., p. 64.
158. A.U., p. 5.

which the human beings continue to fall a prey to sin and wickedness. His views are expressed, however, in all humility. There is no attempt on his part to suggest that the mantle of an *avatāra* has fallen upon him — though truly speaking the great part he played in the spiritual re-awakening of thousands of people, and the tremendous influence he exercised over millions of hearts, leading them to a deep introspection and self-scrutiny, must entitle him to the sobriquet of an *avatāra*, of which truly he was a living symbol.

It is to be remembered that *avatāra* is always integral, inasmuch as the manifestation of Divine Power, which constitutes the essence of *avatāra*-hood, is always full. Sometimes it happens that even when the Supreme Power in the *avatāra* is manifested in measured degrees, the existence of the integral power is an undoubted fact, because even a *part* of the Infinite and the Real is, likewise, infinite and real. The terms *aṁśa*, etc., referred to above, mean that the function of the Divine Power, as frequently observed, is confined to a particular aspect in the *avatāra*, viz., knowledge, strength, and *bhakti*, etc. The fact is that, as Vijayakṛṣṇa explains, God condescends to transmit as much power for a particular object as, in His Divine Wisdom, He considers necessary. It does not necessarily mean that the *avatāra* does not possess any other power. As a matter of fact, various powers are vested in him, each being as full as the other. But God's infinite Power is never manifested in the *avatāra* on any occasion. Even when the Divine Power descends for a minute

in a certain medium, it is to be understood that the Plenary Power is already there behind it. The Divine is perfect under all circumstances, so that His descent also is perfect, though man can know only that much as is disclosed to him.[159]

The realisation of *Brahman* as an infinite expanse of conscious existence and devoted meditation on it, as such, is comparatively easy, and represents the earliest experience of spiritual consciousness. Faith in incarnation, however, comes much later. To believe in the infinite, omniscient, and omnipotent being, passing through all the phases of ordinary human experiences, is very difficult. What is known as the Supreme *Brahman* devoid of qualities is, in the case of Divine incarnation in an *avatāra*, the living actor with human and other forms moving on the stage of the earth. Absolute faith in such a being requires no ordinary discipline and dedication. The story of Bhuṣaṇḍī, in the *Uttarakāṇḍa* of *Rāmacarita Mānasa* of Tulsidāsa, is cited as an instance by Vijayakṛṣṇa, and is undoubtedly an illustration of this fact.[160]

11

Vijayakṛṣṇa on Three Kinds of Body and Five Sheaths (Kośa); Mokṣa :

A Vedāntin finds the soul enclosed and enveloped within the five sheaths (*kośa*) of which the human

159. S.S., III. p. 162.
160. S.S., III. p. 84.

body is composed. These sheaths prevent the soul from realising itself. But the impelling urge for Self-realisation imbues the soul with an energy and momentum by which it step by step bursts out of these sheaths, and at the point of consummation becomes identified with the Supreme Reality (*Brahman*). It attains liberation (*mokṣa*) from the phenomenal world (*saṁsāra*). The varying terminology notwithstanding, the above explanation is analogous to another popular explanation of the physico-spiritual phenomenon of man, according to which the human being is a combination of three layers, the gross and dense (*sthūla*), the subtle (*sūkṣma*), and the causal (*kāraṇa*), corresponding to the three gradations of the elements of which man is composed. In Vijayakṛṣṇa's teachings we find the echoes of both the views, though always in an understandable synthesis.

The three 'bodies' are thus essentially identical with the five sheaths (*pañca-kośa*), as mentioned above. In this manner, Vijayakṛṣṇa's teaching is purely Vedāntic. But he has added, from personal experiences, the nature of subjective reaction as a result of the soul's transcendence of each of the five *kośas*.

The transcendence of the lower or first *kośa* (*annamaya*) is characterised by a sense of detachment from earthly objects. When the second *kośa* (*prāṇamaya*) is passed, all physical excitement vanishes. With the gradual transcendence of the next three sheaths, it is felt respectively as cessation of the

thought-process (*saṁkalpa-vikalpa*), of doubts, and of all fascination for worldly joys and blessings.[161]

Vijayakṛṣṇa's ideas on *mokṣa* are distinguished by great clarity. He explains that it is a beatific state of the human soul, a state of supreme enjoyment of the bliss of the Divine Sport (*līlā*), resulting directly from a perpetual dissociation from the body. The body is then explained as consisting of three kinds of elements, viz., dense or physical (*sthūla*), subtle (*sūkṣma*), and causal (*kāraṇa*), as pointed out above. These constitute three bodies in one, as it were. When all the three bodies disappear forever, without any prospect of re-emergence, the soul is said to be absolutely liberated (*mukta*); but as the formation of a body is based upon the desires, predispositions, etc., (*vāsanās*, *saṁskāras* etc.,) peculiar to it, the cessation of the three bodies implies the elimination of all the *vāsanās* incidental to human life. The total destruction of all *vāsanās* is synonymous with the dissolution of the causal body, which is the inevitable antecedent of, or in a sense, identical with, the Final Release. The mystic, therefore, does not consider himself secure until he has been able fully to transcend the causal condition. For it is a fact that even a single *vāsanā* may lead to the assumption of the physical body, *i.e.*, rebirth.[162]

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161. S.S., V. p. 125.

162. S.S., V. p. 88.

The text here, we are afraid, appears to be unintelligible. It is said that the strength of *vāsanā* compels the soul to assume the subtle body (*sūkṣma-deha*), *i.e.*, to take rebirth. This

Vijayakṛṣṇa says that each of the three bodies has its own way of deriving sustenance and satisfaction. The manner in which the physical body gets nourishment is known to everybody. The subtle body does not require physical nutrition or material food. It is satisfied with the mere sight of what it likes. The causal body (*kāraṇa-deha*), however, is satisfied through the good-will of the mind. Satisfaction of each body is consequent on the cessation of the *vāsanā* pertaining to it.[163]

The Progression of the Soul; Union of Man and God (Mokṣa) :

The soul, says Vijayakṛṣṇa, is always making progress on the way to perfection. It is doing so

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is evidently unconvincing, for birth implies the assumption of a physical body (*sthūla-deha*), which is transient, and not a subtle body, which is comparatively permanent. The subtle body, according to the *śāstras*, is co-eternal, in its universal or individual aspect, with the present creation. The *Sāṁkhya-kārikā* explicitly says that the *liṅga,* which is another name for the subtle body (*sūkṣma-deha*), originates from the Primary Matter (*mūlā-prakṛti*) with the origin of the world, and continues unchanged till the moment of Final Release (*kaivalya* or *mokṣa*). The view of *Vedānta* is also practically the same. It is not correct to say that every time birth takes place, a new subtle body is created or assumed. This body being relatively permanent, it is already there. What results from the excess of *vāsanā* is only the creation and assumption of the physical body (*sthūla*). It may be that the word *sūkṣma-deha* in the text is a misprint for *sthūla-deha*.

163. S.S., V. p. 88.

in the midst of all circumstances. The notion of what is righteous (*dharma*) or what is not so (*adharma*) cannot stand in the way of its progress. The passions cannot even touch the soul. Through quiet (*śama*), contentment (*santoṣa*), discrimination (*viveka* and *vicāra*), and resolution (*saṁkalpa*), the progress has to be realised by us.[164] The nature of everything created, human or otherwise, is unique and yet universal. In other words, there are certain elements which are common to all human nature. But in spite of this, every man has his individual nature also, in which he differs from the rest.[165]

The destruction of the snares of the material world is a prelude to true renunciation (*vairāgya*). Every experience of worldly objects, whether pleasant or painful, is nothing but misery (*tāpa*) in the long run. Hence joy and sorrow are both of the nature of our misery (*tāpa*) and are in fact co-eternal with the egoistic sense, which is the toughest impediment in the path of Self-realisation.[166]

It has been already observed that the transcendence of the three bodies, *i.e.*, the three gradations in our human existence, is the essence of *mokṣa*. In the state of *mokṣa* there is established an intimate and unbreakable union between God and man. Savants and seers have sought to explain the nature of this ideal state, and there has never been unanimity among

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164. S.S., IV. pp. 30-31.
165. S.S., V. p. 200.
166. S.S., III. p. 126.

them. Vijayakṛṣṇa expresses himself on this point with sufficient freshness and clarity. What this union might mean, Vijayakṛṣṇa has expressed clearly. He says that, however high a man's spiritual eminence may be, he is never absorbed in God, but retains his individuality in some peculiar way. It is the same as the condition of a man who dives deep into the ocean to measure its depth, but always retains his separate consciousness. When the soul sinks into the infinite ocean of Divine Consciousness and Bliss, it may be commonly supposed that in the process it has got lost in the Infinite; but the fact, as Vijayakṛṣṇa emphasises, is that its distinctness still persists. He says that if we understand the symbolic language of the *śāstras*, it remains even then as a self-consciousness of its own and has a vision of the Eternal Sport of Divine Self-delight (*nitya rāsa-līlā*). It is interesting to note how Vijayakṛṣṇa in this respect makes a fusion between *Viśiṣṭādvaita* theory of qualified monism and the *Vaiṣṇava* path of devotion and love.

Vijayakṛṣṇa on Paradharma and Upāsanā :

Vijayakṛṣṇa says that the word '*paradharma*' stands for the transcendental state of spiritual perfection, which is the state followed by freedom from *māyā* (*mukti*). The state is obtained as the result of a continued series of preliminary prayer and worship with love and devotion (*upāsanā*) in a number of lives. This chain of preliminary *upāsanā* is graded and

progressive, and is said to consist of the four following links that go to make up the chain :

(1) *Upāsanā of the material principles* : the object of this *upāsanā* being either one or all of the five elements (*pañcabhūta*).

(2) *Upāsanā of Hīraṇyagarbha* : *Hiraṇyagarbha* being the incarnation of the collective unity of the *jīvas* and synonymous with *Vāsudeva*.

(3) *Upāsanā of Īśvara* : the object of this *upāsanā* being one of the Trinity, *Brahmā* or *Viṣṇu* or *Śiva* or their combined forms.

(4) *Upāsanā of Para Brahman* : this being nothing but the worship of the Deity in His abstract and infinite essence (*nirguṇa-upāsanā*).

All these forms and gradations of *upāsanā* are pursued by a man from a state of bondage. But when he transcends the bonds of matter, *i.e.*, when the *upāsanā* has borne fruit, he is no longer bound down to the laws of these different grades of *upāsanās* and has free access to what has been described above as *paradharma*. It is to be remembered, however, as Vijayakṛṣṇa stresses in his teachings, that even when *paradharma* is gained, neither the continuity nor the fruits of the aforesaid *upāsanā* are necessarily lost. Such a person, as a matter of course, can see distinctly the existence and mystery of *paradharma* in every individual form of *upāsanā*. The qualifications of *paradharma* are extremely difficult to be achieved, and rare. For this reason, the qualifications are not

usually found described in the *śāstras*, although suggestive hints do sporadically occur.

12

Vijayakṛṣṇa on Human Evolution and Its Graded Stages:

Vijayakṛṣṇa holds the view—and this, we are afraid, might appear inexplicable, even strange to many—that in the long course of transmigratory existence, it is only once that the soul assumes the human body.[167] Before the assumption of the human body no *karma* is possible to it, inasmuch as the performance of *karma* presupposes the exercise of a rational will, which is present only in the human body. The human birth is, therefore, primarily the result of the natural evolutionary process. But with the assumption of a body, the evolving soul is no longer at the mercy of a merely natural process, the state in which it existed in the subhuman condition. Being invested with a conscious and purposeful will, though working under ignorance, it has the power of choosing between the right and the wrong. Further, the human being is capable of performing *karma* in the light of his own judgement, and as a moral agent making himself liable to bear the consequences of his *karma*. In the course of reaping these fruits of

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167. S.S., V. p. 93.

caurāśīlakṣa yoni bhraman kariyā ekvārai manuṣya janma haya.

karma, a series of lives in succession has to be passed through. Births and deaths — either as human beings or otherwise[168] — occur times without number. But these are the incidents only of the primary

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168. Vijayakṛṣṇa's views — and they are controversial — seem to be like this. The soul takes upon itself the human form only once, after passing through what he calls the eight million, four hundred thousand subhuman states of existence. This long journey, through various stages of subhuman life, until reaching the human level has nothing to do with *karma* and its fruits. The subsequent births and deaths which result from the human *karma*, or the self-initiated activities of man, are so many episodes in the sum total of human life. In this course a man may at times be dragged down under the pressure of his *karma* to be born in a subhuman species; but it would be altogether different in nature from the subhuman state, anterior to the assumption of the human state, mentioned above. Vijayakṛṣṇa does not explain the evident riddle in the statement. But it seems that what he intends to convey is that from matter to man, the line of evolution follows an ascending series. The process is purely natural, and there is no break or interference in the movement from one link to another in the chain. But with the emergence of human consciousness, a new factor comes into play and introduces an element of complexity in the mechanism. This new element is that of will, which is normal to man as his inalienable quality, and is partially free. Man being invested with the will, however limited the freedom of the will may be, makes him a moral agent responsible for his action. This is the doctrine of *karma.*

In so far as man is a free moral agent, he has to reap, under the law of *karma*, the fruits of his action. It is quite probable that a man will have his next birth in a lower animal order, or even in the angelic hierarchy, on account of the operation of the law of *karma*. The state of animal life to which he may descend owing to his evil *karma* is, in reality, different from the same

human life. But because human birth is a special prerogative and privilege, the plain duty of man is to use it well and seriously endeavour to gain a direct knowledge of his true self, which alone can save him from the quicksands of mundane existence. The true self of the man is the Divine Self, and hence to know one's own self is really to know God.

Vijayakṛṣṇa on Seven Evolutionary Stages of Perfection :

Vijayakṛṣṇa further says that, after the soul's first appearance as man, it has to pass through seven successive stages of spiritual evolution. These are the seven steps leading to Perfection.[169]

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animal state into which he had evolved before becoming a man, in the course of his natural evolution. The previous animal condition was that of normal evolutionary ascent, and not the result of any *karma*. But the subsequent animal condition is a descent due to *karma*. In the latter case the *karma* requires to be experienced in its effect before the human status can be regained. In other words, as soon as the animal propensity is eliminated from within him, he is sure to be reborn as a human being again, enjoying the same spiritual status as earlier enjoyed.

169. The seven stages named by Vijayakṛṣṇa are : (1) *jaḍatva*, (2) *vṛkṣatva*, (3) *jīvatva*, (4) *manuṣyatva*, (5) *devatva*, (6) *brahmatva* or *ekatva*, and (7) *rasa* or *līlā*. We are reminded, in this connection, of Vijayakṛṣṇa's disciple, Kiran Candra Darveśa's excellent poetical work named '*Mandira*' (temple), containing a number of exquisite allegorical poems spiritually rich, and arranged in the ascending order in respect to the underlying idea. This order

The seven evolutionary stages may be explained as follows :

(1) *Jaḍatva* :

It stands for the dull, inert, and inorganic existence. This state represents the lowest state or the primordial state in which life, with clear indications of its vitality, has not yet manifested itself out of pure matter. It is to be remembered that even this inconscient condition is also a necessary stage in the gradual evolution of man.

(2) *Vṛkṣatva* :

This is the stage of pure vegetative life. It comprises the organic existence of various orders still to assume an animal form. This stage is certainly an improvement upon the comatose condition of the first adumbrations of life in the earlier stage.

(3) *Jīvatva* :

It stands for a state of animal existence just below man. Elsewhere this stage is called the

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is that of the sevenfold classification to which Vijayakṛṣṇa himself refers. The seven successive sections of the work bear exactly the same title as the author's *guru* (Vijayakṛṣṇa) gave to the stages of spiritual evolution. As it will not be relevant in the present context to dwell on the contents of this beautiful work, we abstain from making further references to it here. The book was originally published in 1915, with an Introduction by Ācārya Rāmendra Sundar Trivedī.

stage of *paśu* (*i.e.*, animal), the words *paśu* and *jīva* being identical.[170]

(4) *Manuṣyatva* :

This is the fourth stage, and represents the organic evolution into the human life. The human stage is the most important of all the seven stages. It marks, on the one hand, the end of the lower natural evolution, and, on the other, the beginning of the higher spiritual evolution. Being gifted with the power of will, man is certainly to be considered as a moral being, a doer of actions (*kartā*), and an experiencer of their consequences (*bhokta*). Similarly, as a moral being on the path of Divine Perfection, he ought to be able to isolate the best part of him, the soul, from the body — that vestige of the inferior evolutionary stages, with which he finds himself associated. The human organism is evolved in the pursuit of a natural scheme; and the consciousness which expresses itself through the medium, *i.e.*, the human soul, is in a fit condition to make further progress on its own initiative. It is man, and man alone, who can and ought to aspire for Divine Perfection. If the soul, dwelling in the human

170. S.S., V. p. 93.

Of the seven stages, this text mentions only six, leaving out, evidently, the third, which may be taken as animal life (*jīvatva*), lying in the scale of evolution midway between vegetable life (*vṛkṣatva*) and human life (*manuṣyatva*).

body, does not take advantage of its superior state by stepping forward in the direction of the Divine, it is liable to lapse into the original inconscience of primitive matter. Vijayakṛṣṇa says that the first duty of a man is to know what he is in reality; and to know himself as such, a man must know himself, *i.e.*, realise his inner essence, as distinct from the body in which the essence dwells. The sense of identity between the body and the soul must be obliterated first, so that it may be possible for the soul, separated from the body and untrammelled by its limitations, to make steady progress towards Infinite Consciousness and Bliss.

Further, it is the knowledge of what is within, which is the basis and the source of the knowledge of what is without. 'Know thyself and everything else will be clear to thee' — this is certainly a truism. A man must therefore be able to know his own self, which is the inner world, the microcosm, in order that he may be able to grasp properly the outer world, the macrocosm, the knowledge of both of which is essential. The different practices of the *Haṭha-yogic* and the *Tāntrika* cultures, viz., the breath-control exercises and other physico-spiritual disciplines like *prāṇāyāma, nyāsa, mūdrā,* etc., are intended to produce a correct knowledge of the body — a knowledge which is not the less important in the direction of destroying the sense of identity with the body and all its allurements, which everybody is

subject to. In other words, the erroneous notion which regards the body as the Self lies at the root of all troubles, and is the worst of impediments in the path of the soul's higher pursuit. The *sādhaka* is, therefore, required, in the beginning, to cut compulsorily at the root of this notion, and then proceed with the *sādhanā* in the way described above under the proper context.[171]

(5) *Devatva* :

This is the stage of heavenly life, representing the working of the cosmic forces in the world at large and in human life. This is a more advanced state of spiritual development than the human, and is distinguished by a correct knowledge of the bright and powerful forces of nature, which alone can help a man in unfolding the secrets of creation. The heavenly or celestial powers are the presiding principles of this world; they are imbued in the entire natural world. Hence the attainment of this state presupposes a thorough, deep, and incisive knowledge of the entire macrocosm.

(6) *Ekatva or Brahmatva* :

It is a state of Unity. This state marks the culmination of *Brahmajñāna*, or knowledge of *Brahman* as the sole Reality. This knowledge, as we have seen above, is preceded by a knowledge of creation. In other words, it is only when a man is able to command a full knowledge

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171. S.S., V. p. 159.

of nature, with all her mysteries, that he can expect to have an immediate realisation of *Brahman*. This realisation called *Brahmajñāna* leads to the unshakable conviction that everything other than *Brahman* is unreal. The world as such has a reality only in so far as it is one with *Brahman*. *Brahmajñāna* implies that everything existing is nothing but *Brahman*, which is devoid of all qualitative denominations and determinations.

Vijayakṛṣṇa further points out that the ultimate aim of man is to realise the Divine Principle called *Bhagavān*, but the knowledge of *Brahman* or the journey along the path of *jñāna* is the first step leading the seeker on. Just as a piece of cloth which is dirty and soiled cannot take upon itself fresh colour, unless and until it is thoroughly washed and freed from dirt, in the same way, the human soul cannot achieve its highest perfection in Divine Union or *Bhagavattva* — the state of *Bhagavān* — unless it has undergone a thorough cleansing and purgation in the pure flame of *Brahman*. The dirt attached to the soul is the impurity consequent on association with the phenomenal reality (*māyā*). Divine ecstasy or *nirvikalpa samādhi* is a prelude to the entrance into *Brahman* in which the soul, free from *māyā*, seems almost, as it were, to lose its identity.

Vijayakṛṣṇa, as we have already pointed out, is very emphatic in his belief that the human soul as such is eternal and is never lost, even

when it is immersed in *Brahman*. What happens in this apparent immersion, according to him, is that the human soul, lost in the illimitable ocean of Bliss, finds itself surrounded on all sides by an infinity of consciousness from which apparently it has no way of escape. The state of *Brahman*-realisation brings home to the soul the fact that it itself is nothing else but essentially *Brahman*, that what it beholds as an object of its consciousness is *Brahman*, and that the consciousness itself is also *Brahman*. *Brahman* may be defined as the eternal self-luminous Consciousness and Delight. The attainment of *Brahman* by the human soul is, therefore, nothing but the transformation of the soul as *Brahman*, preceded by an elimination from itself of the elements of *māyā* or matter. In this state the soul is identified with *Brahman*, though the fact is that the sense of identity does not actually exist. The state of *Brahmajñāna* is the same as in *nirvikalpa samādhi*, as well as the immediate awareness of the existence of *Brahman* in all created and uncreated things.[172]

(7) (*a*) *Yoga* and (*b*) *Rasa* or *Līlā* :[173]

(*a*) *Yoga* :

The state of *Brahmajñāna*, according to Vijayakṛṣṇa, is followed by that of *Yoga*

172. S.S., III. pp. 84-85; IV. p. 188; V. p. 93.

173. The two states of *Yoga* and *Bhakti* (*rasa* or *līlā*) are classed here under one head in order to justify the sevenfold

which means the realisation of *Paramātman* within one's own *ātman*. This realisation presupposes separateness of the self (*jīvātman*) from the body, which is, however,

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classification of the stages (*bhūmis*) of spiritual development, as enumerated by Vijayakṛṣṇa to one of his disciples (S. S., V. p. 93). In this classification, however, the seventh stage is named *rasa*, *i.e.*, *bhakti*, and the stage of *yoga* which lies midway between *jñāna* and *bhakti* is altogether omitted. But *yoga* is an important stage, and its omission in this context can be explained only on the supposition that it is already implied, though not named, in the seven stages referred to above. The ground for placing *yoga* and *bhakti*, as understood by Vijayakṛṣṇa, under one head seems to be that, while *yoga* means Vision of the Divine Being within the Self, *bhakti* symbolises the same Vision in the outer world. It is to be remembered, however, that both the Self and the world outside are altogether different from the same as existing before the dawn of *Brahmajñāna*. The former are purified in the light of the knowledge of *Brahman*.

In varying contexts Vijayakṛṣṇa has referred to the triple means of *sādhanā* — *jñāna*, *yoga*, and *bhakti* — corresponding to the triple aspect of the Divine Being as *Brahman, Paramātman*, and *Bhagavān*. The origin of this classical formulation is to be traced to a famous passage in the *Bhāgavata*, viz., *brahmeti paramātmeti bhagavāniti śabdyate, i.e., Brahman, Paramātman*, and *Bhagvān* — these are the names by which He is called. The interpretation of the three aspects of the same Supreme Principle may be found in *Ṣaṭsandarbha*, a masterly treatise of Jīva Gosvāmin, and in other celebrated works of a kindred nature; also found in the *Laghu Bhāgavatāmṛta* of Rūpa Gosvāmin, and, in a general way, in the commentaries on *Bhāgavata* and other works of the eminent writers of the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism. Vijayakṛṣṇa's teachings are certainly reminiscent of his intensive and extensive readings of all these earlier works; and his attitude to the triple manifestation of the Supreme Reality is analogous to — though not exactly identical

effected thoroughly in the prior state of *jñāna*. The self, after being merged, as it were, in *Brahman*, re-emerges as absolutely pure and spiritual; and it is in this state of emergence that the vision of the Higher Self (*Paramātman*) becomes possible. This vision of *Paramātman* is not a mental act, because it is possible only in the state immediately after *jñāna*. The realisation of *Brahman*, to be exact, dissolves the mind, or purifies it thoroughly. Mind, together with the senses, etc., is a product of *māyā*, and it has no power to function in a spiritual state which follows *Brahmajñāna*. The question of how the visionary experience becomes possible is taken up seriously in Vijayakṛṣṇa's teachings. He says that the state of knowledge represents only a preliminary condition of Supreme Perfection, viz., the purification of the individual self. The real *sādhanā* follows this, and begins with the process of initiation under a competent *sadguru*. In his opinion, *Brahmajñāna* does not do away with the necessity of a *sadguru*, but, on the other hand, paves the way for it and creates an insatiable urge for it.

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with — that of the Vaiṣṇava writers. His interpretation is supported by his own spiritual experiences. We have accepted it and tried to present it in its entirety, keeping in view the fact that Vijayakṛṣṇa undoubtedly claims to be considered as a unique mystic on his own rights.

True spiritual eminence cannot be secured except through an inner transformation; and this transformation requires not only the preliminary Unitive Knowledge or *jñāna*, mentioned above, but a regular initiation (*dīkṣā*) by a *sadguru*, and a steady and unflagging pursuit of a course of discipline and penance under his guidance. The divine energy transmitted by the *guru* into the system of the disciple (*śiṣya*) is a wonderful method of spiritualisation; and when once set in operation, it works unceasingly within the latter, with or without his knowledge, and even against his will or desire. Its reforming activity is automatic, so that even the negligence of the disciple in following a regulated life does not stand in the way of its continued and uninterrupted working.

Vijayakṛṣṇa, as a true *sādhaka*, lays great stress on the repetition of the Holy Name as an aid to *sādhanā*. He says that this *sādhanā*, performed consciously with every breath, aided and supplemented by other subsidiary practices, is intended to bring into manifestation *Paramātman* within the *ātman*. Steadiness of this unique Vision develops manifold supranormal powers in the Self, called the *yogic* powers (*aiśvarya*). These powers are of different types, but the *yogin*, on the way to perfection, should not allow himself to fall a victim to their

allurements, and should never take them as ends in themselves. A practice of restraint in this way further leads to marvellous spiritual developments. Vijayakṛṣṇa notes that self-realisation (*Ātmadarśana*) is of two kinds, viz., pure and permanent, or impure and unstable. So long as the passions are in full strength, or even in partial strength, it is not possible to have the blessings of permanent *Ātmadarśana*.[174] What is obtained is only a temporary glimpse. It is more or less like a vision in a dream, where there is no outer consciousness. But true *Ātmadarśana* takes place when the senses — the purified senses — are wide awake. The *Ātman* is then seen in a crystal-clear distinctiveness, as if reflected in

174. The possibility of *Ātmadarśana* to a man still in the grip of passions may appear to be an anomaly. But, in reality, it is not so. Vijayakṛṣṇa says that, in this state, neither is the *Darśana* stable, nor is the *ātman* pure. Absolute purity is certainly necessary for pure and stable *Ātmadarśana*. It may be added in defence of Vijayakṛṣṇa that, even before absolute purity is gained, *Ātmadarśana* of the partial type may be possible. And, as a matter of fact, it is this *Darśana,* even in its limited form, that sets in motion the urge for absolute purity. The statement *kṣīyante cāsya karmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare* (*Muṇḍakopaniṣad*, II. 2.8.) means that *karma* is destroyed through *Ātmadarśana*, and not that *Ātmadarśana* is secured through the prior destruction of *karma*. *Ātman* reveals itself in its own unique grace and power; and once revealed, it produces its natural consequences. Conditions favourable to *Ātmadarśana* ought to be present, no doubt; but these do not necessarily include, in any sense, either purity or freedom from *karma*.

a mirror. At that moment the consciousness of the outer world, however, does not fully disappear.[175]

(*b*) *Rasa* or *Līlā* :

This represents the last stage, viz., that of *bhakti*, in which the soul obtains a vision of the Eternal Form of Divine Consciousness and Bliss, described as the Body of God (*Bhagavat-vigraha*). It is a vision which, if once attained, is enough to cut asunder the knot of the heart, dissolve all doubts, and destroy all the seeds of *karma*.[176] For this glorious vision, the *Ātman* or the Self has to be prepared through *jñāna* and *yoga*, as already described above. Before this Supreme Realisation takes place, the self-realised souls and the gods (*devas*) appear, as if in a divine pageant, before the devotee. But this does not produce any substantial change in the mind. It is then that the tutelary deities, as well as the Deity most cherished by the devotee (*iṣṭa-devatā*), appear before him. Thereupon, unto him come the rays of the refulgent light through which the mysteries of creation are gradually unfolded. Alongside this experience, though in due course of time, *māyā* or the veil of

175. S.S., II. p. 60; IV. pp. 55, 188.
176. S.S., IV. p. 188.

cosmic ignorance disappears from his gaze; the entire universe becomes for him, as it were, filled with *Brahman* and apparelled in Supernal Light. Later on, the Divine Sport, *i.e.*, the play of the Divine Will in man and the universe, becomes manifest. It is a state of glorious transfiguration, in the midst of which the entire creation seems to be steeped in joy with the Divine Music. This is the highest aim of spiritual evolution — the attainment of this beatific state, the Realisation of *Bhagavān*.[177] Vijayakṛṣṇa's pragmatism and practical suggestion is to be seen in his explanation, regarding this ideal and unique state, that it is more difficult to realise the concretely conceived *Bhagavān*, invested with a glorious form and auspicious qualities, than the abstract *Brahman* above all qualities, actions, modes, names, forms, and other determinations. As a matter of fact, faith in God's assuming a human form, or in Divine incarnation, is more difficult than belief in a Self-conscious, All-pervading, Blissful Principle of Intelligence.[178]

Vijayakṛṣṇa on the Ultimate Principle (Tattva), Bhagavān or Para Brahman:

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that, according to Vijayakṛṣṇa, knowledge makes it easy

177. S.S., IV. p. 159.
178. S.S., III. pp. 84-85.

for the Ultimate Principle (*Tattva*), which is *Bhagavān*, to manifest Itself. The functions, the cosmic sport, and the ideas of the Divine are infinite. Therefore, the Principle (*Tattva*) itself is also described as infinite. Human effort, with its finiteness, can have no access to this Infinite Principle, even through hard penances and unceasing labour of a countless series of lives. This Infinite Principle is revealed spontaneously and momentarily to an illuminated soul, under Divine Grace. The condition precedent to it is that the human soul be liberated from the shackles of matter, after which alone is it entitled to participate in the joys of the Divine Play (*Līlā*).[179]

So long as the senses are subject to the downward pull of external objects, it is very hard for the mind to remain oblivious to the demands of the body and to move into the inner world of spirit. There are only two possible ways of admission into this world, though fundamentally they are the same. The two ways are :

(*a*) The vision of God (*Bhagavān*), once secured along any one of the ways stated above, results in forgetfulness not only of the body but all outer surroundings. It is a state of ecstasy, from which passage into the highest levels of the esoteric life follows as a matter of course.

(*b*) Cultivation of a genuine and sincere love for human beings. This must be a disinterested feeling preceded by a thorough culture and

179. S.S., II. p. 63.

practice of non-violence in thought, speech and deed, and attended with a spirit of good-will for all human beings, including those who appear to be hostile. When hatred, aversion, malice, etc., disappear from the heart, true love begins to rise instead. Disinterested, albeit intense, love in the widest commonalty paves the way for profound meditation, leading finally to that degree of mental and spiritual elevation in which love is directed solely and exclusively to the Divine. This method of God-realisation, as Vijayakṛṣṇa says, is easier than all the rest.[180]

In the language of Vijayakṛṣṇa, *Bhagavān* is described as *Para Brahman* or Higher *Brahman*, and true Divine Wisdom is that perfection of knowledge by which *Para Brahman* or *Bhagavān* is realised. This is *Brahmavidyā par excellence*, and is called *Parā Vidyā*, which lies concealed in the depths of the human soul. When a man is able to dive into these depths, what flashes before him is a preview of the entire corpus of divine knowledge (*Parā Vidyā*) and the methods of its acquisition.[181]

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180. S.S., V. p. 210.

181. This *Parā Vidyā* is to be clearly distinguished from all the lower degrees of knowledge (*aparā vidyās*), which are verbal in character and consist merely of the knowledge of the *Vedas* and their auxiliaries (*Vedāṅgas*).

CHAPTER III

SVĀMĪJĪ MAHĀRĀJ

1

Birth, parentage, education, and early life — Interest in spiritual life — His marriage and service — Death of his father — Śibdayāl, a self-taught man — *Surat Śabda-yoga*; its characteristics — Two types of *Dhvani* : (*a*) *Varṇātmaka*, and (*b*) *Dhvanyātmaka* and two types of Disciples : (*a*) *Svataḥ-santa* and (*b*) *Gurumukha* — Trials and tribulations in Śibdayāl's life — The foundation of Rādhāsvāmī Satsaṅg — The greatness of the Name of *Rādhāsvāmī* — Works of Svāmījī Mahārāj — Passing away of Svāmījī Mahārāj; His followers.

2

Svāmījī Mahārāj on *Svataḥ-santa* as distinguished from *Gurumukha* — The importance of *guru* and degrees of Saintliness — Process of *Surat Śabda-yoga* — Three divisions : (*a*) *Piṇḍa*, (*b*) *Brahmāṇḍa*, and (*c*) *Dayāla-deśa* — The *Ṣaṭ-cakras* — The distinction between *Kāla-puruṣa* and *Satya-puruṣa* or *Dayāla-puruṣa* — The distinction between *Śabda* and *Rūpa* — The methods of *Sādhanā* according to Svāmījī Mahārāj.

1

Birth, Parentage, and Early Life :

Lālā Śibdayāl Singh, popularly known as Svāmījī Mahārāj among his followers and admirers, was born



Svāmījī Mahārāj
(1818 — 1878)

at Agra in August 1818 (Saṁvat 1875). He belonged to a local Khattri family of noble descent. His father, Lālā Dilvāli Singh, was a close and an ardent adherent of the Nānakapanthī faith (*i.e.*, one who accepted the great Nānak, the founder of the Sikh faith, as his spiritual guide, but did not formally accept the Sikh faith), devoting most of his time everyday to a study of the holy books, especially the works of Guru Nānak and other Gurus, *e. g.*, *Japjī Soḍara, Raurasa, Sukhamaṇi*, etc. Dilvāli Singh used to cultivate the society of the great saint, Tulasī Sāheb of Hāthrās, and appears to have been much influenced by his life and teachings, too. This evidently was the source of his interest in the doctrines of the *Santa-mata*. And as the great saint would come to Agra from time to time, it is no wonder that most of the members of the family fell under the spell of his spiritual influence; for we know that, like Dilvāli, his mother, wife and other members of the family were equally devoted to the saint.

Śibdayāl is accorded a very high place among the *Sants* of this country, and his followers look upon him as the incarnaton of the Most Supreme (*Rādhāsvāmī*). A *Sant,* literally a holy man, is one who has had God's blessings. In the terminology of the Rādhāsvāmī faith, it stands for a self-realised devotee who has merged into the Supreme Being, through the potency of his practice of devotion according to *Surat Śabda-yoga*, the highest spiritual path according to this faith. To all this we shall have occaaion to advert later.

That the child would grow to the stature of a very great man had been predicted by Tulasī Sāheb himself, at the time of Śibdayāl's birth. His early history, unfortunately, is shrouded in obscurity. All that we know about it is that even as a boy, when he was under the guidance of his mother, he picked up a good knowledge of Persian, Urdu, Hindi, and Punjābi — the languages that were current in the north-western part of the country. His acquaintance with Persian was sufficiently good, and it is said that he composed an original piece of work in that language, which elicited admiration from the competent authorities. He knew Saṁskrit and Arabic as well, though in these languages his knowledge was probably not beyond the ordinary standard. Even early in life, he shone as a competent teacher. The neighbouring Brāhmin, Khattri, and Bāniā children used to take lessons in Persian from him. His nature was compassionate and his manners amiable, so that people of all temperaments and of different walks of life were spontaneously attracted towards him, and vied with each other to cultivate his friendship.

Interest in Spiritual Life; His Marriage and Service :

In his early life, Śibdayāl evinced a keen interest in spiritual matters. This was due not only to what was inherent and instinctive in him, but also due to the elevating influence of the spiritual atmosphere of his family. Most of the members of the family

were admirers and devotees of the saint of Hāthrās, who, unlike other *Sants*, practised the spiritual discipline generally known as *Surat Śabda-yoga*. It would be of interest to know that even in his earlier years, Śibdayāl acquired an insight into the mysteries of *yoga*, so that when some of the elderly members of the family felt some difficulty or doubt concerning the details of the *yogic* practice, they referred it to Śibdayāl, who resolved and explained everything to their satisfaction.

Śibdayāl was married to the daughter of Lālā Ijjat Roy of Dihili in the district of Faridābād. He initiated his wife, who later on came to be known among his folllowers as 'Rādhājī', into the mysteries of *Satsaṅg*—which, according to the Rādhāsvāmī faith is the active and faithful communion of a devotee with a *Sant-sadguru*, with the aim of spiritual elevation. Under the immediate direction and eyes of the *Sant-sadguru*, he practises *Surat Śabda-yoga*, and is thus assured of gaining success in his quest—the *Sant-sadguru* being an incarnation of the Supreme Reality and the highest guide in respect of all spiritual endeavours. Śibdayāl was deeply interested in *Sant*-literature, which he pored over very avidly. This habit he transmitted to his wife. The wife on her part had a nature so kind, benevolent, and liberal that she spontaneously offered all her jewels and ornaments to her husband to be spent on the ministration of the *sādhus* and the poor. She used to feed numerous people everyday from morning till evening, and distribute money to them according to their requirements.

Death of His Father :

Śibdayāl went to the town of Bāndā to take up a job, on an offer made to him by a judicial officer. But he could not persist in this work there for long, because his inner nature revolted against the waste of much time in secular pursuits, which he considered to be detrimental to his spiritual activities. He then returned to Agra. His father, however, insisted that Śibdayāl should earn his living. At the instance of his father, his father-in-law summoned him to Faridābād and asked him to take up some job. But Śibdayāl did not agree to this suggestion, since he was not ready to spend even a couple of hours a day on this job. He got the lucrative post of a private tutor to the Rājā of Vallabhgarh. He could never like this job either, and returned to Agra after submitting his resignation. By chance it happened that he reached Agra just a day before the death of his father, who passed away in the neighbouring town of Shikohābād, where he had gone to attend a wedding. Śibdayāl was at the death-bed of his father, and he took every care to give him such comfort as he could give during his dying hours. It is said that he even helped the spirit of his father to reach *Satyaloka*.

Śibdayāl, a Self-taught Man :

The most interesting feature of Śibdayāl's life was that he was, from the spiritual point of view, self-taught; for he had no *guru* as such, nor did he take

initiation from any human being. It is said that, till the age of fifteen, he shut himself up in a secluded room in his house and lay for many days absorbed in the practice of meditation called *Surat Śabda-yoga*, referred to above. During these days of dedicated spiritual abstraction, he was on an extra-ordinary plane. He did not even feel the necessity of attending the calls of nature.

Surat Śabda-yoga; *Its Characteristics*:

The particular method of meditation, which Śibdayāl followed in his self-imposed retirement for days together without any interruption, calls for a few words of explanation. The very name of the system of *yoga*, popular in the Rādhāsvāmī faith, implies a combination of *surat*, the soul or the spirit, with *śabda*, the sound-current. It is believed that with the origin of the creative will in the Almighty, there issues a current from the Source — a current which begins to flow downwards in its course of descent. This spiritual current is known as 'sound' (*śabda*), and stands for the creative power of the Lord. The manifestation of the universe, both spiritual and material, results from the activity of this current, which undergoes modification in its intensity, strength, and character at every stage. Every plane of existence has its own sound-current, which is distinctly discernible in meditation. This current is the only power which emanates from the Supreme (*Rādhāsvāmī*), and pervades in various degrees all the regions of the universe down to the lowest

level of the earth. This current is cyclic; it goes back to the Source from which it has originated. As there are different centres from which the current emanates, it is evident that the sound also is of different qualities, though the highest and the best sound is that which is associated with the highest plane of the Transcendent Divinity, described in the terminology of this faith as the state of *Rādhāsvāmī*.

It is interesting in this context to study some striking similarities between the Rādhāsvāmī metaphysics and the Christian conception of the cosmic creation. Even verbal parallels may be found in the two faiths, and oft-quoted words of the Holy Bible ('In the beginning was the Word', etc.) seem to undergo a paraphrase in the metaphysical speculations of the Rādhāsvāmī faith. Similarly, it would really be a scholarly study, not without humanistic interest, to trace the lines of similarity between the respective outlooks of the followers of the Rādhāsvāmī faith and the *Ṣūfīs* of Persia, in both of whom the gradation of the spiritual ascent (or its contrary) is distinguished by many common features.

The method of meditation which is approved and followed by the followers of the Rādhāsvāmī faith demands that the soul of the aspirant, outwardly manifested in his attention and readiness, should be fixed upon the sound-current referred to above. What actually happens is that the upward sound-current, in its movement towards the Source, carries the soul along with itself and reaches the

destination. The most important question, therefore, hinges on the selection of the sound-current, as there are pseudo sound-currents and currents of an inferior type, too, upon which the degree of ascent really depends. The soul cannot be taken up to the fountainhead and centre, unless it is wafted on the crest of the sound-current which issues from that centre. Since there are different centres of the current, as we have just said, some higher and others lower, the question of the selection of the genuine sound naturally arises. It is stated that the sound which represents the life-current of the highest centre has to be discerned, identified and fully associated with. The soul of the aspirant, therefore, has to be fully concentrated upon it. In other words, one is to meditate exclusively and most intensely on that particular sound, as distinguished from the inferior but apparently kindred varieties of it.

Two Types of Dhvani :

(*a*) *Varṇātmaka, and*

(*b*) *Dhvanyātmaka*;

Two Types of Disciples :

(*a*) *Svataḥ-santa, and*

(*b*) *Guru-mukha*

A more detailed exposition of the above method, as we feel, is not quite a desideratum in the light of our aim in the present work, though it may be of interest to elucidate one or two points to

clarify the perspective in regard to the Rādhāsvāmī metaphysics. The sound which, according to this faith, is recognised as a fit object for meditation, and a *sine qua non* for any real spiritual ascent, is not the articulate sound (*varṇātmaka*) coming out of the vocal organs of the human beings, commonly represented by the letters of the alphabet, but the inarticulate and etherial sound (*dhvanyātmaka*) called *dhvani*. So long as a man is alive, this sound-current flows uninterruptedly in every vein and sinew of his system. But in ordinary circumstances, it is not audible because the aural senses of man are usually directed outwards. The audibility of the sound depends on the capacity for the turning of attention inward (in the truest sense of the term); and for this, the aid and guidance of a competent and capable spiritual mentor is needed. What is described as the awakening of the sound by the master, is, in reality, synonymous with the turning of the disciple's attention inwards. As soon as the sound-current is caught, the entire process, from the disciple's standpoint, becomes natural and self-propelled. The aspirant, after this state is reached, has only to sit in meditation, listening uninterruptedly and with unspeakable repletion to the sound. The rest that happens, in the wake of this, comes without any effort on his part.

This shows that in the case of persons who are under the spiritual guidance of a Master, or are called *guru-mukhas*, the process of spiritualisation is set in motion only by external aid. But for exceptional persons, this external aid is not indispensable.

The latter begins to hear the interior sound without any initiatory activity of the Master or Masters. Such persons are known as *svataḥ-santa, i.e.*, whose spiritual evolution is a natural process starting from within, without the necessity of external aid. As Śibdayāl was by instinct spiritually elevated, a *svataḥ-santa* of this type, he did not need the usual guidance of a master. Yet from the fact that Tulasī Sāheb had exercised a magnetic hold upon Śibdayāl early in his life, and that his spiritual powers were great, it may be supposed that Tulasī Sāheb had something very important to do with the spiritual awakening of the boy Śibdayāl. This is denied by the followers of the sect, however.

Trials and Tribulations in Śibdayāl's Life :

In these days of *sādhanā*, Śibdayāl was often troubled in various ways by his relatives, who wanted to dissuade him from his path; though many of them, later on, became his followers. This state of affairs continued for two or three years. Subsequently when they failed to influence him and bring him round to their own narrow paths, it was decided that on a certain day all the people who had any doubts to resolve, or questions to ask, would meet together at a place where Svāmījī, *i.e.*, Śibdayāl, was to be present in person to reply to their queries and resolve their doubts.

To this end a particular day was fixed and people began to assemble at the house of Lālā

Nihāl Cānd, where the meeting was due to be held. They wanted to see Śibdayāl personally present there. Śibdayāl did not attend the meeting in person, but sent his disciple, Pratāp Singh, as his representative. A discussion ensued between him on the one hand and the interested section of the assembly on the other. Answers to queries were given. Thereupon Lālā Jagan Prasād and Lālā Haradvāranāth were asked to state clearly their case, if any, against what Śibdayāl had stood for. Nobody, however, ventured to say anything against him. On the contrary, they left with nothing but high praises for the spiritual elevation and attainment of Śibdayāl. This was a leaf in the wind. It showed how things would happen later on. It was in this way that, in the earlier days of his life, he was able to bring round and deeply impress recalcitrant people of different types and to inspire them with high spiritual ideals. He was a man possessing a commanding personality and great persuasiveness, so that even opponents, under the electrifying influence of his illuminating discourses and force of conviction, were converted to his faith.

Foundation of Rādhāsvāmī Satsaṅg:

The greatest work of Svāmījī Mahārāj was the foundation of the religious order called *Rādhāsvāmī Satsaṅg* in 1861, at a place known after him as Svāmī Bāgh, Agra. It is on record that, even previous to this year, Svāmījī Mahārāj had privately initiated a few women, though, as far as we know, the initiation

was not a very serious or formal affair. For about seventeen years and a half, *i.e.*, from its foundation till the end of Śibdayāl's life, the *Satsaṅg* held its sessions under his direct guidance regularly in his own residential house. During this period about three to four thousand people, both men and women, belonging to different provinces and different religious denominations (though mostly Hindus but also Muslims, Jainas, and Christians) were formally initiated into the *Satsaṅg* and had adopted his teachings. Most of these people were householders, the number of mendicants among them being limited to roughly about a thousand. In course of time, his fame spread all over the land and even abroad, and his phenomenal spiritual powers began to attract people from all corners. Śibdayāl was a model of self-abnegation and sacrifice. In his later days he voluntarily accepted the life of penance and poverty and gave up his work as a teacher.

The Greatness of the Name of Rādhāsvāmī :

Like the other celebrated self-realised mystics and *Sants,* Śibdayāl used to teach his disciples about the great sanctity and power inherent in the Holy Name, (*Satnāma*) and used to reveal the greatness of the name of *Rādhāsvāmī*, which he proved to be a veritable dynamo of esoteric power, and which till then was altogether unknown even in the most advanced circles of spiritual brotherhood in this land. He convincingly demonstrated, through his discourses and practices, that the sound-current associated with this

Name represented, in all its reality, the highest spiritual current known to man. The expression *Rādhā-svāmī*, in this context, should not be taken for its older and more popular Vaiṣṇavite connotations. It means, according to the founder of the sect, an inarticulate sound or *dhvani*, corresponding approximately to the vocal expression mentioned above.

Works of Svāmījī Mahārāj :

Śibdayāl, known as Svāmījī Mahārāj, is the author of two works in Hindi—one in prose called *Sāravacan Vārttik*, and the other in verse, entitled *Sāravacan Nazam*. In both of these he sets forth his views on the Ultimate Reality and the way of its realisation. These works are considered to be of the highest authoritative value by his followers. The signal achievement of Svāmījī Mahārāj as a great spiritual mentor and a mystic of the highest order must, therefore, include this literary output in which he brought out the best in himself.

Passing Away of Svāmījī Mahārāj; His Followers :

Having achieved the object of his life, and having brought the message of Supreme Reality and Power to thousands of suffering souls and disconsolate hearts, awakening them and fusing into them a new spiritual dynamism, Svāmījī Mahārāj passed away in peace and glory, to the Eternal Abode in June 1878, at the age of sixty. His mortal remains were buried at Svāmī

Bāgh, Agra. It was also here, near his *Samādhi*, that the body of his wife, Rādhājī, found its last resting place after her death in 1894, according to her own wish.[1]

Svāmījī Mahārāj, who founded the Rādhāsvāmī sect, was at the head of the Order for about eighteen years (1861-1878). Rāi Sālig Rām, his first disciple, had indeed been informally initiated by him three years earlier. But the career of Svāmījī Mahārāj, giving formal ministration, commenced actually in 1861. His spiritual successor was Rāi Sālig Rām, who took over the reins of administration, and continued the good work done by his preceptor, under the name of Huzur Sāheb. The brotherhood was considerably expanded; many new disciples were initiated; and the popularity of the faith spread far and wide. He continued in office for about twenty years (1879-1898). The third Guru succeeding Huzur Sāheb was Brahma Saṅkar Miśra, celebrated as Mahārāj Sāheb, who succeeded to the headship of the Order in 1898, and served the Order and the Brotherhood in a very competent way until his death in 1907. Mahārāj Sāheb was followed by Sarkār Sāheb, whose term was only for a period of seven years (1907-1913). Sarkār Sāheb's successor was Śrī Ānand Svarūp, known popularly as Sāhebjī Mahārāj, who was associated with the Order as its head for about twenty-four years (1913-1937). Since then, the Order has continued to make progress, with an increasing ramification of its activities. But the tree now rich in its luxurious branch and foliage

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1. J. Huz., pp. 1-108 ; *Kalyāṇa — Santa Aṅka,* Vol. XII. pp. 839-840.

came into being from the seed sown by the founder, the great Svāmījī Mahārāj Śibdayāl Singh. The seminal inspiration was his and to him we turn, with the aim of understanding one of the great mystics of modern India, and study his teachings in order to realise his profundity and greatness.

2

Svāmījī Mahārāj on Svataḥ-santa as Distinguished from Guru-mukhas :

The truths which Svāmījī Mahārāj and his followers realised in their lives and preached to the world are not claimed to have been discovered by them. The truths in their basic forms were known to the earlier mystics, known as *Sants*, of whom Kabir (1440-1518) was probably the oldest. And yet to the credit of Svāmījī Mahārāj, it must be said that he discovered them anew without any guidance from outside, and taught what these early mystics had stood for to the inquisitive seekers. He was in this way a *svataḥ-santa*, as distinguished from a *guru-mukha*.

A *svataḥ-santa*, in the terminology of the Rādhāsvāmī faith, as we have said earlier, derives all his higher knowledge spontaneously from within, and does not depend upon the instruction of a *guru* for his inner illumination. The greatest example of this is Kabir himself. Svāmījī Mahārāj was a *sant* of this type. But a *guru-mukha*, also referred to earlier, is necessarily dependent on the guidance of a self-realised teacher or initiator, *e.g.*, Dharma Dāsa, the disciple of Kabir. The

guru-mukha of Svāmījī Mahārāj was Huzur Sāheb, the second head of the Rādhāsvāmī Brotherhood in order of succession. A *svataḥ-santa* does not generally come down below the 'third eye'. This means that in his concentration the mind and the spirit are diffused all through the physical system; that he is sufficiently elevated; that his focus is aimed at catching the spiritual sound-current in its entirety; and that, if at all he has any moment of fall or relegation, he does not fall below the level of the forehead, which is the seat of the 'third eye'. His aim, then, is to elevate himself progressively to the white matter in the brain, which is the location of the most purely spiritual elements in man.

Further, according to their terminology the six ganglia, from the pineal gland downwards to the rectum, constitute the six stages of the gross matter, of which the material body is composed. These are the centres (*cakras*) to be negotiated and progressively crossed, in order to ascend to the purest regions of the Spirit in the body. The ascent to the purest regions does not guarantee the safety of the aspirant, who may descend back to the lowest state after an ascent. Such a risk is negligible in case of a *svataḥ-santa,* but not so for a *guru-mukha*, who may descend down to the lowest physico-spiritual state.

The Importance of the Guru and Degrees of Saintliness :

The importance of a *guru* is very great. Spiritual advancement without a *guru* is, as Svāmījī Mahārāj says, impossible. The utmost that a man can aspire

to through his unaided personal efforts, is to reach the sixth centre (counting from the lowest to the highest). That is all that he can possibly achieve by himself. It should be borne in mind that the *guru,* in spite of his human form, is the representative of the Almighty and should be looked upon as such by the disciple. But the *guru* on his own part never claims for himself any identity with God (*Khodā*). On the other hand, he considers himself as His servant (*bāndā*) and is thus the model of meekness and humility.

There are varying degrees of saintly achievements, depending upon the degrees of their spiritual elevation; and different names are given to the saints (in the Rādhāsvāmī nomenclature, *sant*), attaining the different levels as follows :

(1) *Parama Sant-sadguru* :

> The saints belonging to this class, which is the highest class in regard to the spiritual elevation, are those who are the chosen ones of the Supreme Being; they are full of mercy and love and they descend upon the earth periodically with a Divine mission. They are the incarnations, commissioned to deliver the spirit in man from the bondage of matter. No wonder, therefore, they have reached the highest level of *Rādhāsvāmī*, the Supreme Name or *Mantra* which, in its articulate linguistic form, represents the sound-currents of the higher spheres of the Mind and the Spirit.

(2) *Sant-sadguru* :

This appellation is deserved by another category of incarnation, less elevated than the former. Such a one is also a superior guide commissioned by the Supreme Being to guide the common man in regard to the manner and procedure of devotion. He and those like him form a category by themselves, and are associated with *satyaloka,* which is one of the higher planes, the original home of the Spirit.

(3) *Sadguru* :

This name is applied to those rare men, lower in spiritual calibre than the previous two, who have either descended to the material world from the purest region of Spirit, or ascended to the region by a dedicated practice of the elevation of the Spirit under the guidance of a superior teacher, *i.e.*, they are either high and elevated *per se* or have gained the eminence through the practice of *Surat Śabda-yoga*. It also means that they have attained the states of *Para Brahman* in *daśama-dvāra*.

(4) *Sādhuguru* :

This name is given to those who have attained the state of *Brahman* in *trikuṭī*, *i.e.* in the stage next below *śūnya* in the second grand division of creation.

(5) *Yogin* :

> Those who have succeeded in reaching *sahasrāra, i.e.*, the first sphere of the Universal Mind (*brahmāṇḍī manaḥ*), having passed through the six psychic or nervous centres of the organism, are called *yogins*.

(6) *Satsaṅgī* :

> The man belonging to this class is one who has not yet attained any of the perfections mentioned, but is on the path towards them under the guidance of a *Sant-sadguru* or a *Parama Sant-sadguru*. In other words, a *satsaṅgī* is a *sādhaka*, while the others are *siddhas*, though of different degrees of perfection.[2]

It is clear from the foregoing classification that the *Parama Sant-sadguru, i.e.*, Svāmījī Mahārāj, is either a full incarnation (*pūrṇa avatāra*) of the Highest Principle (*Rādhāsvāmī*), or a portion of the Supreme Being (*nija aṁśa*), *e.g.*, Huzur Mahārāj. Naturally he can lead the rest of mankind to the Highest. The vision of the holy form (*svarūpa*) of the Supreme *Guru* takes place in the second grand division of creation, viz., *trikuṭī*, that of the *Sādhuguru* in *śūnya*, of the *Sant-sadguru* in the Highest *satyaloka*, and of *Parama Sant-sadguru* in the Highest Spiritual Plane of *Rādhāsvāmī*. It is to be remembered that the holy form (*svarūpa*) of *Sadguru* is sound (*śabda*) which is formless and is the master of all creation.

2. Disc., pp 82-83.

Process of Surat Śabda-yoga :

We are afraid, the terms popular in the Rādhā-svāmī Order, which we have quoted above, may appeal exotic to the common reader. So we feel it necessary that before stating anything in detail in regard to the successive experiences of a mystic on the path shown by Svāmījī Mahārāj, it is advisable to say a few words on the characteristic features and advantages of the path itself. This, we hope, will help resolve the difficulty. It is said that though this path of *sādhanā* is not absolutely a new one, it is to be widely distinguished from most of the popular paths current in the country. Whatever it be, the *Rādhāsvāmī* path of devotion is not a course of culture based on the organic principle of life (*prāṇa*) or even on the mind, nor is it concerned with ritualism or externalism of any kind. It is not connected in any way with the dry intellectualism of the ascetic *saṁnyāsins* nor with the formalities of the so-called *Tāntrika* practices. And it is equally removed from the emotionalism of the popular *bhakti sādhanā*, with its devotional songs (*kīrtanas*) and rapturous dances of various kinds. It is based on the simple principle that, to reach the highest level of Consciousness (*caitanya*) and Bliss (*ānanda*), one must be able to take advantage of the current of power which emanates from the Supreme Height and is capable on its return to lead one along with itself to the Source. Such a current is said to be Sound (*śabda*) in its creative aspect, which permeates the entire world of phenomena as its inmost dynamic principle.

The process advocated by Svāmījī Mahārāj is

that of *Śabda-yoga*, or more perfectly *Surat Śabda-yoga*. It is claimed to be better and more efficacious than all other methods. The greatest advantage of this process is that it is unfailing in its results and does not stop till the highest achievement is made. The usual methods of *yoga* and other *sādhanās* succeed in leading the *sādhaka* to a certain stage of his journey, high or low, but none are able to take one up to the *ultima Thule*. The vital principle of life (*prāṇa*) and the senses is ephemeral and too weak to carry one far. Beyond the Cosmic Mind (*brahmāṇḍī-manas*) there is what appears to be an unfathomable Void, which cannot be crossed over with the help of *prāṇa* and *manas*. In fact, the monad itself, unless it is already equipped with a Divine Power, is liable to lose itself, and to be reduced to nothingness in the depths of this dark and shoreless Ocean of the Great Void (*mahāśūnya*). The *Śabda-yoga*, of which Svāmījī Mahārāj speaks, is the only way to lead the soul to the Divine, which is the soul's Ultimate Source beyond the Void. As to why this is so will be clear when we proceed to discuss the rationale of this *yoga* later on.

Three Divisions :

(*a*) *Piṇḍa*,

(*b*) *Brahmāṇḍa, and*

(*c*) *Dayāla-deśa* :

Svāmījī Mahārāj holds the following view (as explained by Mahārāj Sāheb) :

"There are three grand divisions in creation; the highest is purely spiritual, technically called *dayāla-deśa* or the region of Mercy. The second is spiritual-material, *i.e.*, in this division spirit predominates and matter in a very fine and pure form gets mixed with it and is called *brahmāṇḍa* or the region of the Universal Mind. The third or the lowest division is the material-spiritual region known as *piṇḍa*, *i.e.*, the region of individual mind and desire. Matter in this division is coarse and predominates over spirit, whose action is feeble and never manifests itself except through covers."[3]

Each of these divisions has six subdivisions. The human body is considered to be a microcosm, and represents in miniature the macrocosm or the outer universe in every detail, so that the divisions and subdivisions referred to above have their correspondence in the human body. In other words, the six subdivisions of the individual mind and body (*piṇḍa*) correspond to the six centres of spiritual energy in the human frame, known as *Ṣaṭ-cakra*. The six spheres of *brahmāṇḍa* have their parallel centres in the grey matter of the brain, and the six spheres of the purely spiritual regions are represented by corresponding centres in the white matter of the brain. The highest of these centres is the Abode of the Supreme Spirit.

The Ṣaṭ-cakras :

In order that we may appreciate the nature and length of the spiritual journey the pilgrim-soul is

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3. *Discourses on Radhasoami Faith.*

required to make in its mystic quest for the eternal Abode of Bliss, it is necessary to pass in review the various intermediate stages with a short description of each. The names of the six centres, described as *ṣaṭ-cakras,* are familiar to all, although the functions ascribed to each are, in some cases, peculiar. Counting upwards, the names are: (*i*) *mūlādhāra*, (*ii*) *svādhiṣṭhāna*, (*iii*) *maṇipūra,* (*iv*) *anāhata,* (*v*) *viśuddha*, and (*vi*) *ājñā*, corresponding to the regions associated with the rectum, the reproductive organ, the navel, the solar plexus, the throat, and the pineal gland, respectively.

As in the *piṇḍa*, so in the *brahmāṇḍa* also, there are six distinct spheres through which the *sādhaka* has to pass. These represent, from bottom upwards, the regions of the three Cosmic Forces, viz., *tamas, rajas*, and *sattva*, presided over by the three deities, viz., *Śiva, Brahmā*, and *Viṣṇu,*[4] respectively, and the three higher regions. The latter include the so-called *sahasradala,* the *trikuṭī*, and the *śūnya*, presided over respectively by the dual forces of *Jyoti* and *Nirañjana* (*Nārāyaṇa*), *Brahman* and *Māyā*, and *Akṣara Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti.*[5] Beyond *śūnya*, by way of its extension, as it were, is *mahāśūnya,* which lies as a barrier between *brahmāṇḍa* and the purest region of a Supreme Spirit. The Spiritual Region, likewise, is conceived as having a similar series of what may be called for want of a more appropriate term, successive layers. The first plane is called *bhramaraguhā*, above which is the *satyaloka*, where Truth as *satya-puruṣa*

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4. Disc., p. 51.
5. Disc., pp. 49-50.

is revealed. There are said to be three planes above *satyaloka*, viz., (1) *anāmī*, (2) *alakha*, and (3) *agama*, beyond which is the highest One, *i.e.*, that of *Rādhāsvāmī* or Supreme Person. The soul in its final ascent aims at reaching the highest region. It is evidently a state of absorption, but it is believed that even in absorption, the soul retains the power of emergence and assumption of its apparently lost individuality.[6]

The aim of the mystic who is striving for absolute perfection is to reach the Kingdom of Pure Spirit, beyond the region where matter reigns in its impure form, as in *piṇḍa*, or exists in its purest form, as in *brahmāṇḍa*, beyond the Great Void (*mahāśūnya*) which envelops the entire material creation.

It is not possible to rise to the highest level except under the guidance of a *Sant-sadguru*. Personal efforts, however sincere and strong, cannot help one in going beyond the sixth centre of the *piṇḍa*. As the *guru* is *śabda* in essence, the extent of the ascent of the soul depends upon the centre from which the *śabda* flows down in ceaseless currents. The *Śabda Brahman* is the mystic sound '*oṁ*', which issues from the *trikuṭī* above the *sahasradala*; and the soul which is carried up along the current of this sound is assured of safely reaching *trikuṭī*, where the aforesaid current terminates. Another sound issues from the *śūnya*, which is identified with the plane of *Para*

6. A.Y., pp. 44-60.

Brahman; and a mystic who is able to take advantage of this current can easily realise *Para Brahman*, beyond the sphere of *Brahman*. If the former *sādhaka* is under the guidance of a *guru*, the latter is under a *sādhuguru*. Hence the difference is in the quantum or degree of the progress made. But even a *sādhuguru* is unable to aid the mystic in crossing the ocean of *mahāśūnya* which lies as an intermediate zone of void between Pure Spirit and Pure Matter.

According to Svāmījī Mahārāj, to cross the ocean successfully is to realise Spiritual Perfection. In other words, a true mystic must necessarily place himself under the guidance and command of a *sadguru* who is pure *Śabda* (*sāra-śabda*) or Consciousness (*caitanya*), so that he may succeed in rising to the Plane of Truth-consciousness (*satyaloka*), and secure an eternal freedom from any contact with the world of Matter. The sound-current of *satyaloka* is, in a sense, the purest that a man can possibly catch. But Svāmījī Mahārāj points out that there is still a higher current which must be resorted to if the original Source of Creation is to be attained. This sound-current is embodied in *Rādhāsvāmī*. To find this sound-current, there is no way other than seeking the guidance of *Parama Sant-sadguru*. In this connection, Svāmījī Mahārāj reminds us of Kabir Sāheb, the great Indian *Sant* of the past, who was aware of the existence of this great spiritual current. Kabir said :

> *kabir dhārā agamko satguru doi lakhāya .*
> *ulaṭ tāhi sumīraṇ karo svāmī saṅg milāya ..*

That is, the *sadguru* has shown the current of the Inaccessible. Transpose it, affix it to Svāmī, and then repeat the operation.[7]

The Distinction between Kāla-puruṣa and Satya-puruṣa or Dayāla-puruṣa :

A distinction between *kāla-puruṣa* and *satya-puruṣa* or *dayāla-puruṣa* is often made in the writings of Svāmījī Mahārāj and his successors; and for a proper appreciation of the teachings coming from Svāmījī Mahārāj and his successors in the Rādhāsvāmī Order, the distinction ought to be clearly understood. Love and mercy constitute the essence of *satya-puruṣa* or *dayāla-puruṣa*, and indeed of the entire realm of Pure Spirit; but lower down, it is subordinate to the Principle of Law and Justice. In other words, the world of pure or impure *māyā* is the region of Justice, where Law reigns supreme and *karma*, *i.e.*, the law of *Karma*, fulfils itself through joys and sorrows, and where the mind prevails. *Kāla-puruṣa* is an inferior projection, albeit inferior to *satya-puruṣa*, and in association with the Primal Power (*Ādyā Śakti*) creates and presides over the entire world of matter and mind. To realise the Supreme Truth is, therefore, to make good our indebtedness to *Kāla* and thus be eligible to cross the border of His Kingdom and have an entrance into the Supreme Region of the Divine Plane above.

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7. Disc., p. 163.

The Distinction between Śabda and Rūpa :

It is said that the difference between sound (*śabda*) and form or matter (*rūpa*) persists in the world of *māyā*, so that when one passes beyond the plane of *Para Brahman* or *śūnya* into the world of pure Consciousness (*caitanya*), the difference is obliterated altogether, that is to say, form merges into formlessness and the Eternal Spirit manifested in the sound-currents (*śabda*) alone remains. This *śabda* is above all forms (*rūpa*) and represents the pure spiritual force, there being no trace of materiality in it. Even in *satyaloka,* which is above matter and mind, there is what may be called a semblance of forms, colours, and lines; but on the highest plane of *Rādhāsvamī*, nothing but *śabda* remains, which is a synonym for Love and Bliss, Infinite and Ineffable.

Svāmījī Mahārāj makes it perfectly plain that articulate sound, conveyed through the phonemes of language, has very little spiritual value and potency. He emphasises the importance of the spiritual sound-current (*śabda*), which is unstruck (*anāhata*) sound, emanating in wave after wave, spontaneously and naturally, from the highest regions. As a matter of fact, different regions have different natural sounds. These are all spiritual currents, but they are each graded so that the elevating and sublimating value of all is not the same. A sound which issues from a higher source, for instance, is naturally more valuable than one which issues from a lower centre, and as the human soul is closely associated in its

activities with the sixth centre (*cakra*), the sounds emanating from the lower centres should be ignored in favour of those which issue from the highest ones. The highest is evidently the one, the source of which is the Divine Plane.

It is said that the soul is a spark of the Divine Flame; it possesses in essence all the attributes of the Almighty; but until and unless these are brought into full play, the nature of the soul continues to remain in the dark. A thin sheet of material cloud seems to shroud it, reducing its refulgence to a glimmer. It is to make the soul fully realise and consciously participate in its divine nature that the whole creative machinery has been set in operation. According to the *Rādhāsvāmī* view, *Śabda-yoga* is the awakening of the soul from its agelong primordial sleep within the bosom of Primal Power (*Ādyā Śakti*). This takes place when the spiritual current, after the construction of *satyaloka*, has completed the manifestation of the pure order and has become weak in the process. After a comparatively long period of lull and relaxation, it sets itself to do something altogether new. At this juncture, Time as a Universal Force (*Kāla-puruṣa*) enters into the picture and begins to work in conjunction with the Primal Power (*Ādyā Śakti*)—the Supreme Mother. Infinite souls lie absorbed in the womb of this Power. The emergence of Time as a *Puruṣa* is simultaneous with the manifestation of *Ādyā Śakti* on the one hand, and with the awakening of the mature souls on the other. The sphere of *bhramaraguhā* is the zone through which these souls descend in

their downward course, during which mind and matter wrap them up in their own mantles.[8]

It is thus clear that the truly divine experience of the mystic soul cannot come about so long as it remains encased in body and associated with the mind. Body and mind exist in the Spirit in a subtle form; but they do not and cannot contaminate the soul, for the reason that they lie there merged in spirit and are unable to assert themselves. Those, however, who, on account of newly achieved maturity, try to rise up to the surface cannot escape the spell of the Divine Eye, and separate themselves at once from the Body of the Pure Spirit. In consequence of this constant cleansing process, the Divine Plane retains its absolute purity at all times.

The Methods of Sādhanā According to Svāmījī Mahārāj :

The methods of *Sādhanā* recommended by Svāmījī Mahārāj for the development of spiritual powers consist of the following :

(1) *Sumīraṇa* :

It means constant repetition of the Name of *Rādhāsvāmī* in one's mind. This Name represents, as has already been observed, no connection with the *Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa* cult, but represents instead the phonetic expression of the inner inarticulate sound,

8. Disc., pp. 202-206.

proceeding from and returning to the highest spiritual source both internal and external. This process is known as *Sumiraṇa*, corresponding to *Zikr* in Persian. While in this stage, the mind has to be applied to an upper centre.[9]

(2) *Dhyāna* :

It signifies meditation on the centre, referred to above, called *Fikr* in Persian.[10] The proper centre for such meditation is the heart or the navel region (*hṛdaya* or *nāvi*). Meditation on a lower centre is difficult and comparatively fruitless. We may remember that the principle of *Sahaja-yoga,* of which Svāmījī Mahārāj was an ardent advocate, demands that the lower centres be avoided as far as possible, and that attention should be fixed on the middle of the two eyebrows (*bhrūmadhya*) to ensure quicker and more effective results.

Constant practice of the withdrawal of the spirit-current upward, while in meditation, helps the devotee secure freedom from pain, anxiety, fear, etc., in respect to his experience of *prārabdha karma*. This practice also enables the soul, by withdrawing itself from the sphere of accumulated impressions of *sañcita karma,* to have its effect substantially obliterated. These impressions produced by the external objects, as well as by the personal desires and thoughts, are vivified only by

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9. See article on *Santamat,* by Śrī Ānanda Svarup Sāhebjī Mahārāj in *Kalyāṇa,* a Hindi journal, *Santa Aṅka,* pp. 66-67.

10. R. S. M. P., para 29.

the power of spirit, so that when this power is drawn up high, all this becomes lifeless.

(3) *Guidance of a Sadguru* :

A person who is already embarked on a spiritual quest requires constant guidance from a true adept, who is in a position to help him not only in external details but also from within. A true guide is one who has reached the purely spiritual world, whether the world of Truth (*satyaloka*), or higher still, the world of Supreme Reality (*Rādhāsvāmī*). Outer help, in the form of a vision of the *guru*'s physical body, is also indispensable. It should be remembered that even the physical body of a *Sadguru* is not like the body of an ordinary man, but is a highly spiritualised centre of influence. Love for the *sadguru*, nay, even for his visual appearance, has certainly a very facilitating and elevating effect on the practitioner.

(4) *Surat Śabda-yoga* :

It implies communion of the soul with the internal sound-current working within the man. It is also essential, and in its purest form is denoted by the above-mentioned term. It is well known that the spiritual force in the form of sound-current is working within every person. When the aural faculty becomes sufficiently developed, the sound begins to be audible to him. It is a rare moment; but when this happens, the attention has to be concentrated on the sound, the current of which moves upward in the

direction of the original source. This is known as *Sultan-ul-Azkar* in Persian and *bhajan* in Hindu devotional terminology.

The teachers of the Rādhāsvāmī faith, including its great founder, are of the opinion — and this is also confirmed by the *yogic* literature — that two distinct types of such currents are audible in the human body: of these one is associated with the sensory, and the other with the motor activities. It is the former which has to be made the object of exclusive attention, and the latter has to be rejected. It is believed that the latter current flows in the direction of the outer world and does not deserve to be attended to. In the context under consideration it is not difficult to understand why the practice of meditation in a secluded place, and abstinence from more than one meal a day, are advised.

(5) *Abstinence from Animal Food and Intoxicants*:

Animal food is supposed to be highly injurious to the practice of meditation, as the energy generated by it stands in the way of the inward ascent of the soul. Intoxicants too are similarly detrimental in so far as they affect the nervous system adversely. Both are inimical to the cherished *Rādhāsvāmī* devotional pursuits.

(6) *Cultivation of Special Virtues*:

Those special virtues to be cultivated include humility, compassion, equanimity, chastity, etc. The

cultivation of these virtues implies a practice of restraint which is essential for every kind of spiritual progress. It is said that so long as the knot of matter, which holds the spirit in us in bondage, is not untied, the mind of man cannot but remain subject to passions and evil propensities. This knot is the egoistic bond uniting the opposite elements of Matter and Spirit. When the knot is broken, the need for restraint disappears altogether, because the spirit is completely free from material allurements.

(7) *Resignation to the Will of the Supreme Being* :

This enables the devotee to become free from the effects of present action (*kriyamāṇa karma*).

Thus, on the whole, we may sum up the achivements of Svāmījī Mahārāj as those of a unique Indian mystic. Svāmījī Mahārāj should be called one of the makers of modern India, inasmuch as his spiritual discourses, personal example, and magnetic personality, together with his personal experience as a seer and mystic of rare powers, gave a new spiritual light to thousands of souls who were in religious obscurantism and lifeless ritualism. Moreover, he spelled out a new gospel and charted out the outlines of a new cosmogony and the place of the human spirit therein. God-realisation, they say, is as difficult as it is puzzling — puzzling because the paths to it vary with the time and clime of the seekers. To the great credit of the founder of the Rādhāsvāmī Brotherhood, it should be said that he was not merely a

self-realised mystic, but the maker and framer of a new metaphysical and spiritual system, which in its comprehensiveness and aptness must have a place of importance among the most celebrated methods developed here and elsewhere, by many, at different times.

However, there is a clear indication that on Svāmījī Mahārāj's mind there was a deep impress of the idealistic mysticism of the *Ṣūfī* mystics of Persia and the devotional strains of mystics of mediaval India, especially Kabir. Similarly, the spiritual interpretation of the human physiology by Svāmīji Mahārāj reminds us of the same in the *Tāntrika* methods of *sādhanā*, specially *haṭha-yoga*. The *yogic* strains in the teachings cannot also escape notice. A kind of eclecticism naturally results; and this prompts us once again to repeat our impression that the common bond which brings together all Indian mystics, in a beautiful chain, is their blending of idealism and eclecticism, along with their emphasis on personal experiences and realisations. All this, however, is not at all intended to belittle the originality and uniqueness of Svāmījī Mahārāj, whose position must for many many years to come adorn the topmost hierarchy of the great mystics and *Paramahaṁsa* saints of India.

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Chapter IV

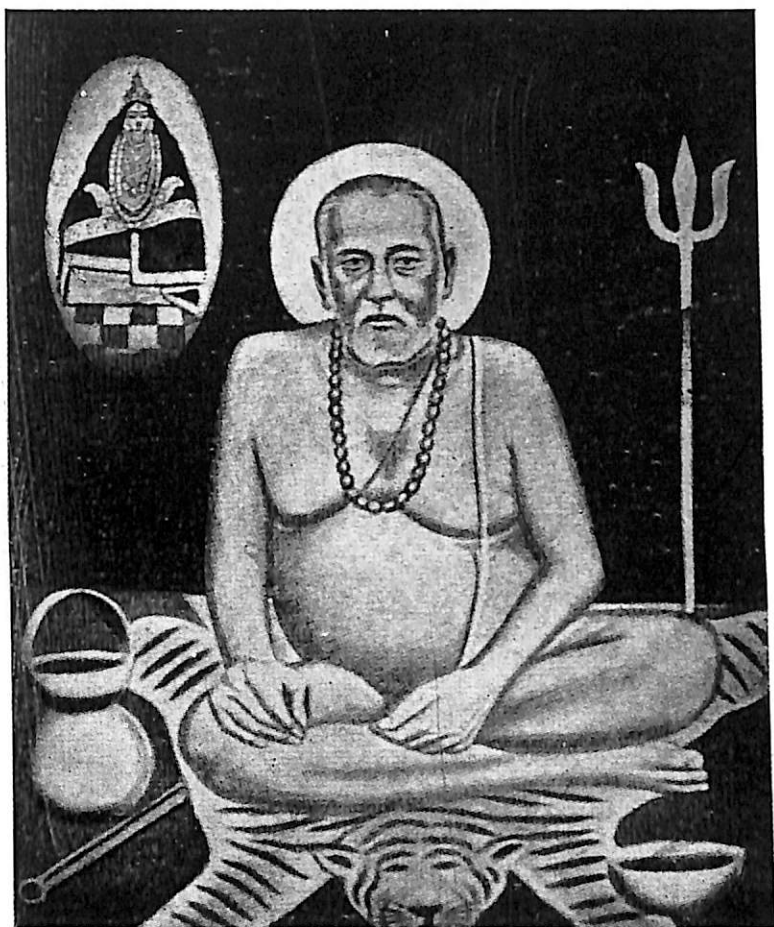
VĀMĀ KṢEPĀ

1

Birth, parentage, and early life — Vāmā's formal *dīkṣā* under *Kula-guru* — His investiture of sacred thread Ceremony (*upanayana*) — Vāmā's attraction for Tārā Devī of Tārā-pīṭha — Vāmā's departure from home — Vāmā, the eccentric (*Kṣepā*); his devotion to Tārā Devī — Vāmā's initiation (*dīkṣā*) under Brajavāsī Kailāsapati — Tārā-pīṭha, a great centre of *Tāntrika* culture; Vāmā, a priest (*mahanta*) of Tārā-pīṭha — Vāmā's esoteric powers — Vāmā in perpetual *Samādhi* even when tortured — Vāmā, a realised self (*siddha-puruṣa*) — His passing away.

2

Vāmā viewed as a mystic — The courses of his *Tāntrika-sādhanā* — The awakening of *Kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, the basis of spiritual life — First signs of Awakening; the Egoistic Consciousness — The effect of the awakening of the soul — Untying of the knot of matter — The Six Centres (*Ṣaṭ-cakras*) — The union of man and God — The vital power and its characteristic function — Vāmā on *Kuṇḍalinī* and its significance in natural evolution — The Awakening of Cosmic *Kuṇḍalinī* and the Advent of the Golden Age (*Satyayuga*) — Time and condition of the Great Awakening — Vāmā on *paśu-puruṣa* and *divya-puruṣa* — The possibility of lapse after Awakening — The origin of *bhāva* and passage through it into the Transcendent stage — The relation between the human soul and the *Kuṇḍalinī*.



Vāmā Kṣepā
(1837—1914)

Birth, Parentage, and Early Life :

Vāmācaraṇa, popularly known as Vāmā Kṣepā (the eccentric or demented Vāmā), was born about the year 1837 A. D.,[1] in a village called Āṭlā near Tārāpūra, situated on the bank of the river Dvārakā in the Birbhum district of West Bengal. He was the eldest son of his highly pious and religious parents, Sarvānanda Catterjee and Rājkumārī Devī.

Vāmācaraṇa was spiritually intoxicated even from his childhood. He had no interest in studies nor had he, due to the financial stringency of the family, any opportunity for securing even the rudimentary school education. Whatever education he received was in the form of oral instructions conveyed through devotional songs of the popular devotees (*bhaktas*) of the past, *e.g.*, Rāmaprasāda, Kamalākānta and other poet-saints of Bengal, and through the stories and songs of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. His father used to maintain the family from what he could earn by singing, in company with his sons, religious songs from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and performing *Kṛṣṇa-yātrā*, a mimetic devotional performance, popular in some rural areas of Bengal. Vāmā, who took part in these performances, always greatly enjoyed his role.

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1. The year of his birth is given differently in different works. Haricaraṇa Gangopādhyāya in his *Vāmā Līlā* accepts the Bengali year 1244 (about 1837 A.D.) as the year of the Kṣepā's birth, which appears to be the correct one (see *Vāmā Līlā*, pp. 68-76). The older view, however, was that of Jogindra Nath Catterjee, the author of *Vāmā Kṣepā*, according to whom the correct date should be three years earlier.

Vāmā's Dīkṣā under Kula-guru; His Investiture of Sacred Thread Ceremony (Upanayana):

Vāmā received his *dīkṣā* from the hereditary preceptor of the family (*kula-guru*) at an early age; and, almost instinctively, his heart was filled with the sole desire that he should devote all his time to the worship of the deities. He began to mould his life on the same ideal and was encouraged in it by his father, whom however he lost shortly afterwards.

Vāmācaraṇa's sacred thread ceremony took place at a rather late age of sixteen, the delay being due to the stringent financial condition of the family. He was thus formally initiated into the Brāhminic order. After the ceremony was over, he observed the necessary injunctions, and completed with distinction the religious functions of a *brahmacārin* within a very short period.

Vāmā's Attraction for Tārā Devī of Tārā-pīṭha and His Departure from Home:

After the death of his father, Vāmā's mother was almost stranded owing to the miserable pecuniary condition. She was unable to maintain the family, and hence she went to her father's place with the children. But there too she found it difficult to stay for long and she came back shortly afterwards. Being asked by his mother to work and earn his livelihood, Vāmā, though he was naturally absent-minded and indifferent towards worldly life, left home and wandered about from place to place, ostensibly in

search of a job. But his mind being fully absorbed in the contemplation of the Divine Mother, Tārā Devī of Tārā-pīṭha, he would often be gravitated to that place as a devoted pilgrim and with great inner peace. Engrossed in the thoughts of the Mother, he was absolutely indifferent towards everything else. Very often he was seen running in wild devotional ecstasy to Tārā-pīṭha where he would spend days and nights, reciting the devotional prayers, dancing and singing the holy name of the great goddess. The place had an added attraction for Vāmā. There lived, at that place, the great *yogin* Brajavāsī Kailāsapati, who loved the young spiritually intoxicated soul, Vāmā, very deeply. There were also other *sādhakas* in the neighbourhood. Vāmā's heart would always yearn for their elevating company and he would often sit at their feet to listen to their discourses.

Vāmā's mother had asked him to work for subsistence. What Vāmā did to obey his mother's request was, of course, to work for subsistence; though with the difference that, if his mother meant by it material subsistence, to Vāmā, subsistence could be nothing else but religious and spiritual. He worked indeed, but with no worldly end in view; all his thoughts and activities proceeded solely in the direction of increasing his devotion to the Divine Mother and satisfying his burning passion to serve Her. No wonder that the subterfuge did not work for a long time. Vāmā found it hard to retain his attachment to the two worlds, the material world and the world of the spirit. He therefore left home, and became a *sannyāsin* of the *Tāntrika* order.

Vāmā, the Eccentric (Kṣepā); His Devotion to Tārā Devī :

Vāmā's devotion to the Divine Mother steadily grew in intensity and absorbed his soul completely, so that She soon became the sole object of his interest. The world became to him nothing but the great Goddess, in whose lap he was placed as a child sits in the lap of its mother. Already he had risen to the eminence of a great *yogin*. He eminently satisfied the *yogin*'s ideal as described in the *Gītā*, rising above the formidable vagaries of existence: pain and pleasure, honour and dishonour, purity and impurity, depression and exaltation, etc. It was really an irony of fate that such a God-intoxicated mystic, an ideal *yogin*, in his early days should be looked upon by the people of the place as a maniac. In fact, he came to be popularly known as 'Vāmā Kṣepā'; that is, Vāmā, the eccentric.

Vāmā's Initiation (Dīkṣā) under Brajavāsī Kailāsapati :

As we are told, Vāmā's initiation (*dīkṣā*) was nothing short of a miracle, actually demonstrating that the Divine Himself comes to the aid of the earnest seeker. Unknown and unnoticed by his relatives, Vāmā left home forever and proceeded towards Tārā-pīṭha, the dream and solace of his childhood. He swam across the river Dvārakā, and as he touched the bank, he heard a voice saying, 'Listen my child, you are a fit receptable for the heavenly wisdom'. He not only heard the voice but also saw a vision. What

was unfolded before him was the figure of Kailāsa-pati, the living Lord of the great crematorium (*śmaśāneśvara*), the incarnate *Bhairava*,[2] as it were, walking on the waters with wooden sandals (*khaḍam*). Vāmā could easily recognise that the voice was of Kailāsapati himself. The voice and vision were portentous. They indicated that the time was mature for Vāmā's initiation. It was then and there that the great *yogin* initiated Vāmā and imparted the Secret to him of the Supreme Truth (*paramatattva*). This kind of initiation (*dīkṣā*), called *sparśa-dīkṣā*[3] in the *Tāntrika* literature, is to be distinguished from what is known as *mantra-dīkṣā*. *Mantra-dīkṣā* is initiation

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2. A *Bhairava*, according to the *Tāntrika* tradition, is the true disseminator of the *Tāntrika* spiritual knowledge in the world. Originally taken as one belonging to *Śiva*'s retinue and one endowed with the God's power, the *Bhairava* in our context is a mortal who, by his successful pursuit of the highly difficult *Tāntrika-sādhanā* and discipline, has come to be invested with divine powers. To a neophyte in the path of the *Tāntrika-sādhanā*, the appearance of a *Bhairava* is very helpful. It is the *Bhairava* who rouses the dormant powers in the beginner and shows him the correct path.

3. *Sparśa-dīkṣā* is so called because the ceremony consists in touching the body of the disciple by the *guru* with his hand. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* (Chapter XIV) observes that the teacher (*guru*), before touching the disciple, should meditate on the Supreme Reality and concentrate his mind on the radical *Tāntrika-mantra*, as mastered by him and as diffused in his body. Thereafter he should infuse the spiritual energy into the disciple by his touch, as a result of which the *mantra* and its object will be revealed in the latter's heart, followed by illumination.

through *mantra*, *i.e.*, a sacred syllable or series of such syllables charged with spiritual energy received directly from the initiator (*guru*). It is usually whispered into the ear of the devotee by the *guru*.

Vāmā's mother, after a long search, came to know that Vāmā was at Tārā-pīṭha. She went all the way to that place of pilgrimage and entreated her devoted son to return home, but in vain. She went back home in tears, entrusting her son to the care of his *guru*, Kailāsapati, the *Bhairava*, and the *Śmaśāneśvara*.

Tārā-pīṭha, a Great Centre of Tāntrika Culture; Vāmā, a Priest (mahanta) of Tārā-pīṭha :

In this context a few words must be said about Tārā-pīṭha. From bygone times it has been a well-known religious centre and a place of pilgrimage. In the older days, it is said that many *sādhus* and *sannyāsins* frequented the place for *sādhanā*, some of whom attained high realisations within a short period, due to the great holiness of the place. The name of Ānandanātha was famous amongst them. The regal saint, Rāmakṛṣṇa (not the saint Rāmakṛṣṇa of Dakṣineśvara), the Rājā of Nātore, would often visit the place and discuss esoteric and spiritual matters with Ānandanātha. When the post

4. A *Kaula* is an adept in the left-hand worship, who has realised his perfection, through a regular course of worship in *kula-mārga*. A *Kaula* may be a *śākta*, or a *śaiva*, or both. A man does not deserve to call himself a *Kaula* unless he has

of the chief *kaula*[4] was created for this great devotional centre, Ānandanātha was the first to be appointed to it. Rājā Rāmakṛṣṇa being deeply impressed by the great depth and absorption of the *yogin*'s spiritual culture, and convinced that the ritualistic *sādhanā* and *bhajana* of Ānandanātha were the expressions of a self-realised soul, placed him in charge of the worship of the Goddess Tārā. The Rājā himself bore the expenses incurred on account of this appointment and took steps for the perpetuation of this arrangement. On the death of Ānandanātha in 1754 A.D.,[5] the post was given to his chief disciple Mokṣadānanda, who, in his turn, was succeeded by Vāmā Kṣepā, and in the latter's case it did not take place much after his initiation described above. Finding Vāmā Kṣepā rather young and incapable of maintaining his family on his meagre allowance, the officers of the Nātore-Rāj estate agreed to bear all his expenses, as well as those of his family. At the age of twenty-one, in about 1858, when he was serving the great mother Goddess Tārā, the presiding deity of the *pīṭha*, Vāmā lost his mother, to whom he was greatly attached. From that time onwards, he never left Tārā-pīṭha.

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realised his identity with the Supreme Mother. Judged from the standpoint of the technical details, there is some subtle distinction between the *Kaula-mārga* and the so-called *Tāntrika-mārga*, as is evident from the life-history of the great *Kaula*, Abhinavagupta of Kashmir. (see K.C. Pandey : *Abhinavagupta*).

5. V.Ks., p. 46.

Vāmā's Esoteric Powers :

The intensity of Vāmā's devotion and love towards his mother can be gauged from the fact that when he heard of his mother's death, he could not rest content until he carried the dead body on his shoulder, swam across the river, and performed the obsequies in the celebrated burning *ghāṭ* of Tārā-pīṭha. A miracle is said to have occurred on the occasion of his mother's *śrāddha* ceremony,[6] when he, the poorest of the poor, could feed hundreds of *Brāhmins*. It is stated that on the day of the ceremony, the sky was overcast with heavy clouds and there was an apprehension of an imminent torrential downpour. The Brāhmins who had been invited assembled at the place in due time. But confident of his powers, Vāmā offered the *Brāhmins* seats and arranged for their food. Thereafter brandishing a stick, he made a big whirling motion, encircling as it were all the persons seated there. Shortly afterwards it began to rain. But it was found to the amazement of all that the entire area of the surrounding locality was drenched and flooded with water, except the portion enclosed within the potent magic circle of Vāmā. The incident, as we see, is reminiscent of Gideon's miracle described in the Holy Bible. His desire for the per-

6. According to the Hindu tradition, the obsequial oblations are offered to the departed souls, a certain number of days after death.

fect heavenly bliss and peace of his mother's departed soul was thus fulfilled by his ability to satisfy the Brāhmins fully and perform the obsequies and oblations according to the prescribed religious (*śāstric*) rites.[7]

Vāmā in Perpetual Samādhi Even When Tortured :

Vāmā was absolutely childlike in his outward behaviour. People often took advantage of his simplicity and self-absorption. For instance, he would often remain plunged in *samādhi*, in deep meditation for several hours, devoid of all outer consciousness. At such times, people would feel that he was shirking his priestly duties. The employees of the Nātore-Rāj estate, on whose endowments the religious establishment depended, would chastise him when they came to supervise the affairs, and found Vāmā engrossed in his deep spiritual pursuits, apparently neglectful of his prescribed duties. But Vāmā was not the least daunted or browbeaten by this unfavourable and often insulting treatment, and nothing could weaken his determination or deter him from offering in his own way his heartfelt devotion to the Divine Mother. He had nothing but pity, love, and forgiveness for his ignorant critics and abusers. It was truly Christ-like, the fruit of a complete self-dedication to the Supreme Goddess,

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7. V. Kṣ., pp. 53-56.

and based upon the realisation of ascendancy over all passions and predispositions.

Vāmā, a Realised Self (Siddha-puruṣa) :

Vāmā's supreme non-attachment and equally unique spirit of devotion, along with many other apparent features of a great *yogin*, soon attracted many people to him. His fame as a great spiritual adept and a realised soul (*siddha-puruṣa*) began to spread in all directions, and people with a spiritual bent of mind began to flock to him for guidance in spiritual matters. But Vāmā was no babbler; rather he was very strict and reticent in regard to the communication of his own realisations to others. Though he would talk and discuss problems of spiritual life with everybody in a general way, he would communicate the actual method of *sādhanā* to a select few only. The secrets of spiritual truths and practices he would not reveal to all and sundry, but only to those whom he considered worthy of receiving them.

His Passing Away :

Having spent the greatest portion of his life in the worship of the Mother, Vāmā passed away from this world in 1914, at the advanced age of seventy-seven, to find an eternal shelter at the lotus-feet of the Supreme Mother.

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Vāmā Viewed as a Mystic:

We have sketched above an outline of Vāmā Kṣepā's life. It is evident that Vāmā was pre-eminently suited by his nature, constitution, and inclination to become a mystic, with his mind fixed upon and absorbed in the contemplation of the Supreme Reality. His pure life — with his keen sense of detachment from the vanities of earthly existence, his earnestness and sincerity, his emotional and yet self-restrained nature, his early devotional predilections, his austere *brahmacarya*, his attraction for the society of God-intoxicated people, and his close association with some genuine *siddhas* of his time — all these harmoniously helped and contributed in building up the spiritual career of Vāmā. He was one of the most reputed *sādhakas* of his time, whose realisation was effected through an all-absorbing devotion pursued and cultivated along the *Tāntrika* path. He was a *śākta*, in the sense that his approach to the Supreme Reality was through devotion to God conceived as the Universal Mother. Though not a *yogin* of the *haṭha-yoga* school or any other allied school, he passed through all the stages of the inner *yogic sādhanā*, recognised in the systems bearing on the culture of the coiled-up serpentine spiritual power (*kuṇḍalinī-śakti*) inherent in man, and the six psychic centres of energy in the human organism, (about which we have spoken, in a fairly detailed manner, in the earlier chapters dealing with Rāmakṛṣṇa and

Vijayakṛṣṇa). His illumination followed in the wake of this *sādhanā*, and gave him command over the secrets of Nature's resources.

Vāmā's Courses of Tāntrika-sādhanā :

A detailed and factual account of the various stages of the development of Vāmā's spiritual consciousness is, unfortunately, not available. All that we know is just enough to convince us that his spiritual career began with his initiation by his *guru* Brajavāsī Kailāsapati at Tārāpura, better known as Tārā-pīṭha, a place which became subsequently famous on account of its association with his own life and activities. On the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī* power in him, through the grace of the *guru,* he saw to it that the awakened beam of energy passed through the six physico-spiritual centres (*cakras*), unlocking and combining them in a vigorous activity in harmony with the still ascending energy. Then it entered into the *sahasrāra,* as in the case of great *Haṭha-yogins* and *Tantra-yogins.* It was in this background that Vāmā adored the Supreme Reality as the Mother. It was not so much a worship offered by a person to one more elevated and eminent than he, as love felt by a child for his mother. What was Vāmā's worship but calling out, in a voice throbbing with the deepest love and devotion, the name of the 'Mother' ? He did this in a repeated manner and in a crescendo, showing how emotion was surging in his heart. It was the cry of a child for the mother. Along with

this cry, spasmodically and alternately he would weep and smile, as if the Mother were playing hide-and-seek with him.

Vāmā was undoubtedly a *yogin* of the highest order; and consequently his devotion too, in whatever ostensible way it expressed itself, had all the value of *yogic* action. The *Tāntrika* ceremonies and practices performed by him, of course in his own way, had the significance for him of actual *yoga,* corresponding to its different stages. He was, for instance, a *vīrācārī sādhaka*[8] conducting his devotional activities in the manner of a *Tāntrika*. He had himself been formally anointed[9] in due time by Mokṣadānanda, with the consent of his *guru* Kailāsapati.

The Awakening of Kuṇḍalinī-śakti, the Basis of Spiritual Life :

Vāmā, like many other mystics, *e.g.*, Vijayakṛṣṇa from among those whom we have considered, held that spiritual perfection cannot be attained unless the *kuṇḍalinī*, which, according to a *Tāntrika*, lies dormant in every person in the *mūlādhāra,* is

8. The term has already been explained in the first Volume of this book, Chapter XII.

9. As Vāmā received the form of initiation called *vedhadīkṣā* from his *guru,* it was not necessary for him to go through the ceremony of anointment (*abhiṣeka*). But he received the *abhiṣeka* in the above manner, setting thus an example to other people.

roused and made to function. If this is done, it is followed by freedom from worldly bondage and complete divinisation in due course. This power is bound to assert itself and spiritualise one's existence when the time is ripe and when one exerts oneself under proper guidance. Vāmā emphasised that what is needed for its awakening is to keep oneself strictly confined to one place and continue the practice with sustained patience and perseverance. It is indeed a very delicate and difficult discipline, in which a constant vigilance and an all-out effort are absolutely necessary. Even a slight degree of laxity in the effort is liable to bring about a serious setback. Vāmā was, however, very liberal in his views; for he believed that, besides the *Tāntrika* culture which he had personally followed and of which he had practical experience, other types of culture too are equally helpful in bringing this dynamic power (*kuṇḍalinī*) into action. But he added that, if one choses the path of *Tāntrika-sādhanā*, the guidance of a competent teacher (*guru*) is particularly essential.[10]

Vāmā's teachings throw a flood of light on the *sādhanā* pursued along the *Tāntrika* path; and here again it is his own personal experiences which lead to the development of his ideas. The first signs of the awakening of the serpentine power, he says, are not usually discernible. Sometimes a mere touch of a great master is enough to turn the soul's eye inward

10. T.S., pp. 279-280.

and produce introversion, and at such a moment a glimpse of this power with all its activities can be caught.[11] Vāmā himself is said to have helped one of his devoted admirers [12] in securing this insight by a momentary touch.

First Signs of Awakening; The Egoistic Consciousness.

The wisdom contained in our great ancient scriptures and the teachings of the saints and seers of our land repeatedly tell us that this mundane life of ours is a life of bondage, due to the overweening egoistic consciousness which weighs upon our mind. The *yogins* assert that this egoistic consciousness (*asmitā*) has its origin in ignorance (*avidyā*), and that it leads to the growth and rapid hold on us of the twin dispositions of desire and aversion (*rāga-dveṣa*). It is as an offshoot and consequence of this that the fear of death (*abhiniveśa*) seizes our mind completely. All these go to constitute the play of worldly existence. The *Tāntrikas* hold, and Vāmā endorsed their view, that this sort of life bears on it the

11. T. S., p. 279.

12. The admirer, Pramode Kumar Cattopādhyāya had the privilege of meeting Vāmā, and then listening to his advice and exhortation (*upadeśa*) shortly before the latter left this world. Cattopādhyāya recorded all the points of his conversation with the saint in his personal diary, and later published them in a systematic form in his book in Bengali *Tantrābhilāṣīr Sādhusaṅga*. On the point mentioned above, reference may be made to this book, pp. 278-300.

stamp of an unreal vision analogous to a dream, dreamt when the senses and reason are in abeyance. The mundane existence is thus nothing but a dream which follows from the serpentine spiritual energy in man (*kuṇḍalinī*) being dormant within the lowest physico-spiritual centre within the body, coiled up like a sleeping serpent. The three and a half folds of the coiled serpentine power represent in effect the limitations of human consciousness, from which comes a perverted vision of Reality, popularly known as mundane life. It is from this inaction of *kuṇḍalinī* too that there spring egoism and worldly attachments with all their attendant evils.

The Effect of the Awakening on the Soul :

It is true, as it has been observed earlier, that the first signs of our spiritual awakening are not always noticeable. But in some cases even the physical system is found to disclose these signs. The vital and mental, including the cognitive parts of our being, are also similarly responsive. As regards the former, we have definite statements to this effect in the *śāstras*. As regards the latter, Vāmā says that the soul thus affected feels no longer any pleasure or interest in the objects of the world and begins to fret against all limitations. It actually feels as the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VII., 1.23.1) says :

> *nālpe sukhaṁ bhūmaiva sukham*
>
> There is no happiness in the finite.
> Happiness is identical with the Infinite.

The soul, responsive to the awakening of the spiritual energy within, thirsts for freedom and wants to soar above all limitations. It is at such moments that the *sādhaka*'s trek in a real quest for Reality begins, and if fortunately he is privileged to find a competent *guru* to guide him in his path of realisation, the *sādhaka*'s soul is able to transcend all limitations.[13] The signs thus mentioned by Vāmā are as follows :

(*a*) Origin of a sense of attraction for the Divine.

(*b*) Desire for stepping beyond the bounds of the finite existence into the Infinite and Everlasting Bliss of the Divine Mother.

(*c*) All worldly pleasures, including the keen sensual enjoyments, pale into insignificance, and later become unattractive and repulsive.

Untying of the Knot of Matter :

It follows thus that the awakening of the serpentine spiritual energy in man is not at all a far cry from his being blessed with the shower of Divine Grace. The fact is that the human soul (*puruṣa*) in its essential

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13. op.cit.

MM. PT. Gopīnāth Kavirāj — in his paper on *The Descent of Grace* (*Śaktipāta* in *Kalyāṇa*, special number on *Sādhanā* Vol. XV. pp. 86-87) — points out that these very signs, which Vāmā ascribes to the state at the end of the somnolence of the *kuṇḍalinī*, characterise the descent of Divine Grace of the potentially first degree, though in its milder form (*tīvramanda*).

nature is pure and immaterial. By Divine sanction it is ever free and unlimited, but in its tenure of worldly existence it seems as if it has lost its natural purity and freedom, and being involved in *prakṛti* remains subject to the latter's laws which impose various limitations on its intrinsic freedom. When the soul is thus caught in the meshes of the primordial *prakṛti*, there originates an egoistic consciousness which stands behind all the movements of the soul in the dominion of matter. This ego, better known as *aham* or 'I-ness', is the cause of mundane existence. The ego is a composite structure, being made up of the elements of *puruṣa* as well as of *prakṛti*. This ego constitutes the primary knot of matter. It is evolved from matter but contains within itself a reflection as it were of the transcendental *puruṣa*, or, in other words, the soul in its original state.

The primary object of the *Tāntrika-yoga* as indeed of every other kind of *sādhanā*, is to separate or discriminate the two elements from each other so that in consequence of this discrimination, the *puruṣa* may return to its pristine purity free from the entanglements of matter, and the element of *prakṛti* may recede to its original source. This process is known as the 'untying of the knot of matter' (*granthi-mocana*). The ego constitutes the primary knot, but affiliated to it are various other knots, too; and the number may be practically unascertainable, because it is these knots which represent the numerous centres of attraction in one's material existence. The awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* is the precursor of a spiritual movement which

results in loosening and gradually untying all the knots in which the soul is involved, and in making it realise afresh its innate spiritual character beyond the activities of matter.

The Six Centres (*Ṣaṭ-cakras*) :

The serpentine power or *Kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, when released from its agelong slumber, begins to assert itself, and rises up like an upward-moving current from centre to centre, until it reaches its destination in the glorious region within the crown of the head. Between the locus of this power in the nethermost region below the spinal column (*mūlādhāra*), and the thousand-petalled lotus (*sahasradala kamala*) within the head, there are various centres (*cakras*) which may be regarded as so many knots of matter arranged in an ascending series of gradually diminishing materiality. *Tāntrika-sādhaka* of the highest order that he was, Vāmā's teachings contain enlightening commentaries upon and explications of these centres. They are certainly the fruit of his own spiritual experiences and realisations.

Vāmā observes that the knot in the lowest or *mūlādhāra-cakra* is the most complicated one, and it is very difficult for an aspiring *yogin* to release it completely. As soon as this knot is disentangled, the *kuṇḍalinī* discards its coiled condition forever, and begins its upward flow along the *suṣumnā-nāḍī* in a straight direction. This upward movement is a sure indication of a man's spiritual progress, though

it has to be accelerated through constant self-exertion. The slightest slothfulness and negligence are bound to have an unfavourable reaction.

The *svādhiṣṭhāna-cakra* is the second centre through which this dynamic power has to pass. Special effort is needed to enable the seeker to remain unaffected by the temptations and dangers emanating at this centre, and to proceed along his chosen path steadily and unswervingly.

The third centre called *maṇipūra-cakra* is located higher up in the navel region, towards the back. After this centre is crossed, the *sādhaka*'s progress becomes quicker and easier. Fresh powers evolve in him, filling his mind with an unending stream of joyful feelings. Worldly temptations and inducement to coarse enjoyments certainly continue to dog the path of the *sādhaka* until the *maṇipūra-cakra* is crossed. On the whole, let there be no impression that the *maṇipūra-cakra* is very easy to cross; on the other hand it is very difficult. But nothing can hold back a strong and determined effort towards its upward march. Hence it is said that the transcendence of this centre is an index of the extraordinary power with which the *sādhaka* is endowed. Steadiness of mind, single-minded devotion, and moral virtues are the qualities which buttress and save him from any pitfall and increase his upward momentum. In this process, the *sādhaka* is able to cut the gordian knot, and with the perilous stage of his flight upward having passed, has more or less a serene passage further up; he steadily rises

upward.[14] A true man according to the *Tāntrika* nomenclature is one who has succeeded in realising the higher level of life and consciousness, above the third or the navel centre. The mind of the ordinary man of the world remains entangled in the region of the three lower centres. His involvement is too deep, and his energy too inadequate, to enable him to hope for further ascent. It is only the dedicated soul of the true *sādhaka* to which the higher ascent is vouchsafed. The next three higher centres, through which the current passes, are the following.

The fourth centre, called the *anāhata-cakra*, has its location in the cardiac region. The fifth centre which follows is given the name of *viśuddha-cakra*. Its seat is in the upper thoracic region (*kaṇṭha*). It is actually the name given to the hyper-subtle path along which the vital power ascends and functions in the region of throat. The sixth, and the last centre is labelled as the *ājñā* or *prajñā-cakra*, with its location in the spinal column corresponding to the region between the eyebrows, a place where subtle intuitive consciousness and vitality have their origin.

Beyond this last and sixth centre, which is the highest centre of intra-organic activity, there is the infinite space of unlimited, bodiless consciousness. This is called *sahasrāra* which is, in a sense, the Kingdom of God or Supreme Spirit. The six inner centres, as we have seen, are located as centres of action on the subtle vital nervous track within the

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14. T.S., pp. 281-287.

spinal column. Transcendence of these six centres by the *kuṇḍalinī* is consummated by union with the Divine, in which God and the human soul are brought together and locked in the closest embrace.[15]

The Union of Man and God:

Vāmā's significant comment, in this connection, is that the joyous union of man and God takes place beyond the limits of cosmic manifestation. He points out that any access to the path of *yoga* depends on the activity of the vital power within our psychic organism. The *Tantras* identify this power in us with the manifestation of the Divine Mother in each one of us; and its rhythmic up-and-down movement is described as Her divine dance, which is going on in us at all moments of our existence.[16] In its incessant nature it may be said to correspond to what science would call the 'pulsation of life.' The activity of the vital power in its sweep covers the entire region between the sixth, the highest centre, and the first, the lowest centre. It commences at *ājñā-cakra* and extends as far down as the *mūlādhāra-cakra*. This highest centre is in fact associated with the origin and dissolution of life. Being the most prominent of all the *yogic* centres, all-embracing and luminous, it is held to be the best object for the practice of meditation and discrimination and for illumination and higher

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15. T.S., p. 283.
16. T.S., pp. 282-284.

spiritual experiences. According to *Vāmā*, all the higher faculties of man have their seats in the neighbourhood of this centre. The Eye of Wisdom (*jñāna-cakṣu*) or the suprarational illumination develops in due time within this very region. This again is entirely dependent upon the spiritual forces at work within us, and the activity of the six centres in association with these forces.

The Vital Power and Its Characteristic Function :

The essential characteristic of life is extremely subtle and does not easily lend itself to be measured by the ordinary human understanding. It is of the nature of vibration from the highest to the lowest level of its manifestation. In the midst of this continuous pulsating movement, there are the six centres connected with the spinal path — centres from which the sap of vitality, the current of life, streams out in an unceasing flow and keeps all the parts of the physical organism in action. The vital power has a double function. It flows along the vital tracks within the body, and keeps the body strong and active; and it also helps, through energising, the activities of all the intra-organic faculties, viz., mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), etc. The former function depends on its flow through the six centres, while the latter function is discharged by it through its stability in the *prajñā-cakra*. Both the movements are simultaneous and incessant.

Vāmā on Kuṇḍalinī and Its Significance in Natural Evolution :

Vāmā says that man represents the crown of Nature's evolution, by which he repeats what the ancient scriptures (*śāstras*) have said. We may remember that as per the ancient Indian scriptures, the origin of human organism was preceded by a preparatory stage in Nature's cosmic laboratory, where a series of eight million four hundred thousand experiments of body-formation was conducted. In other words, the soul has taken upon itself the human exterior after it has passed through 8,400,000 successive incarnations in the bodies of beings of the subhuman species. Vāmā, on the basis of the *Tāntrika* traditions often repeats that man, although representing the highest and best fruit of Nature's creative efforts, may according to the extent of his intrinsic or acquired development or retrogression, be placed in one of the three categories, viz., (1) *paśu,* (2) *vīra,* and (3) *divya.* These categories may be explained in the following manner :—

Man in his coarsest and crudest stage is called a *paśu* or animal, and does not deserve to be called a human being in the true sense of the term. He wears a human form indeed, but the human qualities are yet to establish themselves in him. Vāmā's explanation of this circumstance is at once intelligent and convincing, coming as it does from an almost unlettered man. It is, even in its embryonic and sketchy form, a revolutionary approach in understanding

the mysterious course of human evolution. He says that the animal body evolves into the human body, and during the process of this evolution, a portion of the higher vital power of the animal concerned evolves itself on a parallel line into its soul. This evolved product, as a result of successive evolutions, *i.e.*, in consequence of the actions, experiences, etc., of different lives, manifests itself as the human soul, which in the long run reaches its blessed culmination in the Supreme Self. In the lowest stage of man (*paśu*), the soul, representing the best portion of the animal life, remains dormant, or, in other words, is in an undeveloped condition in the *mūlādhāra*. By *mūlādhāra,* as explained earlier, is meant the principal centre (*cakra*) situated at the lower terminus of the vital track within the spinal column. The human soul begins its activity consistent with human life through the intermediation of vital power from that very centre. All the movements of the human soul start from that very centre. This centre is called *mūlādhāra*, as it forms the foundation (*mūla*), by virtue of its vital power of self-consciousness.

In the process of evolution, as we understand, life grows from animality into humanity in the course of ages. Similarly, the soul, which is the basis of the vital power referred to above, bides its time, to become fully evolved into the human soul. It is just like the silent development of an embryo within the mother's womb. This undeveloped state of the soul, which bears a close analogy to the condition of the embryo, is usually described in the *Tantras* as the dormant

state (*suptāvasthā*) of *kuṇḍalinī*. According to the teachings of the *Tantras,* the dormant soul in a man of the lowest level, whose nature is vitiated by a gross animal nature, is supported by the vital power only to lie coiled up in the *mūlādhāra* like a sleeping serpent in its coils. Due to the evolution of the Conscious Power (*cit-śakti*) through actions and experiences in a series of lives, it becomes developed and manifest. It is thus clear that the soul accumulates power in the course of its evolution. When in this way it becomes sufficiently powerful, the process of evolution becomes complete and the soul transcends time, once again enjoying its original freedom. The strength necessary for the evolution comes from Nature. It is for this reason that in the undeveloped or the less developed state, *prakṛti* appears, as it were, like the mother of the soul, and in the state of fullest development *prakṛti* becomes subservient to the soul.

This, according to Vāmā, is the great secret behind the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*; its sole purpose is to restore to the soul its original glory. The soul, intellect, and mind may be said to be groping in the blurred and hazy world of matter within the human body, so long as the *kuṇḍalinī* has not arisen from its stupor. Its awakening is the climacteric moment in human life, when there starts a new, dynamic, and absorbing activity within : the spirit, in an exercise of all its energy, starts on a victorious march for self-determination, for the true release of man from the clouds of this world, and for passage unto the bliss and joy of union with his Creator.

The Awakening of Cosmic Kuṇḍalinī and the Advent of the Golden Age (Satyayuga):

We have already spoken of the *kuṇḍalinī* and its awakening in man. By man we have meant an individual, as distinguished from the entire human race. It may be of some interest to note that this awakening is not confined to the individual only. For, it may extend to the entire race. When the dormant *kuṇḍalinī* of the universal man, rather than of a single individual, is awakened, we have the beginning of what may be called the Golden Age (*satyayuga*). Every man has his own individual temperament and mental constitution— in fact, he has his own individuality. His body, which is unique and distinguished from other bodies, consists of different elements including a network of nerves and other channels for the flow of the sap of vitality.

In the same manner, the universal body also has its own nervous system as well as life, mind, intellect, and the soul. Millions of individual souls live and move and have their being in this universal body. These are truths which nothing can dispute or alter. But the animal soul, *i.e.*, the soul of a man who has not as yet transcended the animal stage, called *paśu-bhāva* in the *Tantras*, is not capable of appreciating these great truths. Only a true man, *i.e.*, who has realised the *vīra-bhāva*[17]

17. We have already referred to the three states of man on the spiritual scale. At the bottom, the state is that of the animal, beastly in nature, about which we have spoken above. The next state in the ascending order is that of the hero (*vīra*), when man consciously and deliberately starts on a con-

of the *Tantras*, can catch glimpses of this Truth. Only a man who has been able to reach the highest stage called *divya-bhāva*, can understand it properly. Even a *divya-sādhaka*, however exalted his position in the scale of spiritual advancement, cannot have a direct realisation of the Supreme Truth — a realisation, the privilege of which is reserved for the liberated soul alone, a soul which is absolutely free from all worldly bonds.

When under the Divine Will, the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened in all men considered as a group, the old cosmic order will begin to change and yield place to a new and better one. What will happen in such a Golden Age (*satyayuga*) may well be adumbrated. In the human society then, all petty desires, attachments, and ambitions will disappear altogether, being replaced by a universal current of pure and all-embracing consciousness. The society of man supported by the supreme experience of the deep spiritaul truths will fulfil its highest destiny, on the advent of this age. All the activities of man and all his thoughts and aspirations will turn naturally towards God.

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quest and subjugation of his animal propensities along the path of *Tāntrika-sādhanā.* He wages a relentless war against what pulls him down and simultaneously makes all the serious spiritual efforts to elevate himself. The consummation in *sādhanā* leads to a perfected state (*divya-bhāva*) when man is able to shine in all his innate glory. To Vāmā, a true *Tāntrika*, all these states are absolutely real, though nowhere in his teachings does he give any indication about his having reached the highest state, which, judged by his profound spirituality and wonderful *yogic* powers, he must have reached.

Dialating on the incidence of the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*, Vāmā points out that it is a very rare occurrence, and does not depend on human will. The power does not manifest itself and becomes ready for action except when a *sādhaka* really deserves it by his special qualifications for the same. He observes, however, that in the life of every individual, this power is bound, at least once, to show signs of stirring and awakening. An alert and wise *sādhaka* takes advantage of this situation when the serpentine power spontaneously bestirs itself, and he tries by all means to make the circumstance permanent. There is no doubt that very serious and special efforts are needed for this purpose. If, however, there is the slightest amount of indifference or slothfulness, the short awakening does not lead to any permanent result. The parable of the five thoughtless virgins, in the New Testament, Gospel of St. Mathew, will be found analogous in this connection.

Vāmā's teachings in this context also show that he is keen to point out that in this spiritual awakening everybody has an equal chance. He strongly emphasises that this power makes very little distinction between a scholar and an ordinary man. The *kuṇḍalinī*, as if it is preordained, gets awakened spontaneously in the life of every man in the days of his adolescence, more particularly in youth after the signs of puberty have clearly appeared. At this time, there arises a natural yearning in the heart for the society and fellowship of the opposite sex. When union takes place between a lover and his beloved, and love, deep and sincere, suffuses the heart, an indes-

cribable sense of delight overflows the mind. This is the most natural and appropriate occasion for the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*. But in the lives of those in whom a great degree of precocity exhibits itself—that is, in those whom an excessive worldliness twists and perverts the natural growth of personality, even early in life, and makes them crazy for the satisfaction of the material, and very often, carnal pleasures—the power of awakened *kuṇḍalinī* is directed towards life. The inexorable divine law operates here, so that the unsteady minds of these persons whose loftiest aim does not go beyond the sensual pleasures cannot derive any benefit out of this awakening.

Time and Condition of the Great Awakening :

From the foregoing analysis of Vāmā's teachings, it is evident that the life of a growing adolescent of a normal temperament, who feels a peculiar thrill of enjoyment after the attainment of puberty, illustrates the spontaneous awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*. But in the case of others, this mode of awakening is never a rule. In their case, however, the awakening takes place against the background of a sense of disgust and detachment, which comes upon them towards the end of their youth. The rise of *kuṇḍalinī* is the most felicitous under the influence of pure love, free from all carnal associations. Either through inherent mental strength, or on account of satiety caused by continued experience, the keenness of sensory pleasure loses its edge in the course of time. It is at such moments that the

kuṇḍalinī begins to uncoil itself. It is thus clear that even after the indiscretions of youth, the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī* is not only possible, but, in some cases, easier and simpler than in other circumstances. In normal life, however, which represents the life of a married individual, enjoying the fullness of marital life, the awakening is based upon the reciprocity of love untouched by the pleasures of the sense.

The most important source of this awakening, indeed more important than the above-mentioned physical and sensory factors, is the effect of the spiritual power of the *guru* exercised upon the disciple. Nothing is possible, Vāmā strongly emphasises, without the living grace of the self-realised *sadguru*. Another important occasion for this awakening comes when a man feels utterly helpless under some sudden danger or pain. Even extreme poverty, which is believed to have a depressing effect upon the soul, provides an occasion for the awakening of this power. Vāmā is very particular in pointing out that the experience of extraordinary happiness or misery, which touches the soul to the quick, facilitates in some measure the Great Awakening.

Vāmā on Paśu-puruṣa and Divya-puruṣa :

The foregoing pages must have made it clear that even after the first awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*, the transformation of the mental attitude and the sublimation of consciousness are not in every case equally sudden and quick. There are certainly concrete instances of miraculously sudden transformations, but these are

generally rare and what is generally found is a progressive sublimation. According to Vāmā, the first two states (*bhāvas*), viz., animal and heroic, represent a long and arduous course spanning, in the majority of cases, a period of several years. So long as a man continues in his animal state, it is not possible for him to have an insight into the secret working of the Supreme Consciousness. The omniscience of this consciousness cannot be realised by an animal-man (*paśu-puruṣa*). But when through the persistent and pressing influence of the awakened *kuṇḍalinī*, the animal nature (*paśu-bhāva*) is changed and the real man is reborn, *i.e.*, regenerated as the true man, Divine Knowledge dawns upon him and converts him into a Superman (*divya-puruṣa*). The fact known to many, but realised only by a few, is that God sees us with our eyes, hears with our ears, and thinks with our minds.

The true Self being one, the empirical ego as the subject of relative consciousness, and the transcendental spirit as the subject of universal consciousness are absolutely identical. To feel that I know a thing is to feel that God knows it. What is always happening is that the same act of knowledge is referred to the same self. But, what a pity that under the limitations of ignorance there is an apparent division and dichotomy in the self, so that we have an empirical self distinguished from the true universal self. The certainty about the identity, in actual experience, of these apparently two selves, is the result of the transformation of the *paśu* in us into the *vīra*, and is evidently the effect of the first stage in the process of spiritual sublimation, initiated by the awakened *kuṇḍalinī*.

The Possibility of Lapse after Awakening.

All the great mystics, especially those who belong to the *Tāntrika-yoga* school, quite naturally, on account of the factors stated above, attach greatest importance to the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*; and Vāmā, the self-realised *Tāntrika*-mystic, was no exception. The difficulties one has to meet in this connection are twofold. First, there may be initial difficulties experienced in the process of awakening, about which we have spoken above. Second, there may be further difficulties in keeping the *kuṇḍalinī* awake after it has once shaken off its torpor, or in re-awakening it after it has lapsed into a temporary inaction subsequent to the first awakening, to which also we have referred above.

Evidently from his own experiences, Vāmā in this connection says that it should be borne in mind that if the awakening is once effected, no subsequent relaxation on its part can ever be permanent; for the tendency to re-awaken remains latent in the power, and takes effect under even a very slight stimulation. The fact is that even a momentary awakening produces a change in the established order of nature, which continues to become more pronounced in the course of time and makes itself deeply felt at the right moment. The process of re-animation, once initiated in the spiritual nature, can never again be held back. The subconscious forces, in the form of desires (*vāsanās*) and predispositions (*saṁskāras*) in man's consciousness, which have swayed him for a long time, cannot be expected to die out in a moment. For a time they

lie in ambush to make such forays as are possible for them.

What is called a lapse on the part of the *kuṇḍalinī*, after its awakening, is, therefore, really no lapse at all. It is only a temporary recrudescence of the old habits, at a time when the strength of the first wave of awakening is in an ebb. But as the subsequent waves follow, rolling one after another, and the spiritual turbine inside releases greater and still greater stores of energy, all these petty impediments are destroyed one by one, and the soul regains its innate purity and power. The disciplines incidental to a strictly moral life, together with various other forms of physical, emotional, nervous, and mental efforts, are absolutely necessary to keep the flame burning and, by preventing any possible lapses, quicken the process of regeneration. The difference between a man of action and a man of comparative inaction lies consequently in this, that while in the former case the progress is very quick, in the latter it is relatively dull and slow. But it is sure that if the awakening is really effected there is no permanent setback. With these words of confidence and faith, Vāmā addresses his disciples and admirers lest they should despair of overcoming the initial difficulties in this great adventure.

The Origin of Bhāva and Passage Through It into the Transcendent Stage :

It may be definitely stated that there is a distinction between a man who is a mere *paśu* and one who is

passing through the *paśu-bhāva*. A mere *paśu* is one in whom the regenerative process has not yet been initiated. In other words, a man whose *kuṇḍalinī* is still slumbering belongs exclusively to this category and may be called a mere *paśu*. But when the *kuṇḍalinī* has once been awakened, he can no longer be described as such, because the activity of the serpentine power has set into operation in the organism, a subtle process which must remove the animality in his nature sooner or later and make it truly human. Consequently a man after its first awakening is said to be passing through a stage of *paśu-bhāva,* as distinguished from the unredeemed condition of a mere *paśu*. *Paśu*, *vīra,* and *divya*, as we have had the occasion to describe earlier, are the names of the three states (*bhāvas*) of which *paśu* is the lowest and *divya* the highest. The entire course of the movement of *kuṇḍalinī* is thus called *bhāva*, because in its varying conditions it covers all the three human states.

According to the *Tantras,* a man is required to come into the fold of a *bhāva*, pass through its three successive stages, and ultimately transcend it altogether (*bhāvātīta*). The transcendent state is the ideal condition of the human soul, when it is free from all the fetters — it is virtually the state of *jīvanmukti*. But this blessed condition is not attainable unless one passes through *divya-bhāva*. The *vīra* or intermediate *bhāva* is preparatory to the *divya*; it is preceded by the *paśu-bhāva,* which is nothing but the preliminary and the most undeveloped state. A mere *paśu* cannot be a *sādhaka,* but one in *paśu-bhāva* is certainly a *sādhaka,* though of the lowest order. The difference between

the two states is due to the fact (also referred to above) that while in one the purifying fire has not been kindled, in the other it is already a flame and doing its work of purification.

The Relation between the Human Soul and the Kuṇḍalinī :

In the earliest phase of manifestation, the *kuṇḍalinī* may be spoken of as an aspect of the *jīva*, or even as its nature (*prakṛti*). The two are mutually related, in a way in which one may be said to be a complement to the other. Neither the *jīva* nor the *kuṇḍalinī* is complete in itself; but when the two are united, they become transformed into the *jīvātman*, which is complete in itself. Comparatively speaking, *jīvātman*, too, is as it were incomplete. It finds its complement in *Paramātman* or God. The *jīva* or the human soul which pertains to man on the lowest plane of development, is, in fact, nothing but a form of *śakti*. But when the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened after prolonged experiences of a varied nature, the *jīva* as well as the *kuṇḍalinī* yearn for mutual union. The evolution of *kuṇḍalinī*, however, takes place in due time and not earlier. Before this evolution sets in, the *jīva* cannot look upon himself except as a mere power or *śakti*, because in that state he is closely identified with body, life, and senses. All his existence is then of a gross nature. But when the mind and the senses become sufficiently developed, the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened and begins to rise. *Kuṇḍalinī* is the power of consciousness and this awakening is really the awakening of the dormant

consciousness. Thus what was inactive in the past becomes active in the present.

The power of consciousness in the human soul is the *kuṇḍalinī*. Its movement on awakening is in the direction of gradual development towards the vital centre. This centre in the *Tāntrika* nomenclature is called *prajñā-cakra*, to which a reference has already been made. It represents the central position in relation to life, intellect, mind, self, etc. When the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened, the *jīva* is re-born, and being invested with this power of consciousness, begins to be known as *jīvātman*. When evolution has reached this level, all the powers begin to appear and cohere in this *ātman*. But the perfection and infinitude of the Divine Reality remains still a distant ideal and an object of striving, and the endeavour involves a long course of development through a series of lives. In the long run, the *jīvātman* or the human soul becomes united with the Divine Soul; and as a result of this union, it becomes transformed into a pure, eternally awake, liberated, perfect, and all-knowing Self. Its divinisation is then complete.[18]

We have attempted above to give a brief but fair estimate of Vāmā Kṣepā. What we have stated above is in a nutshell the biography of the great saint, followed by a review and explication of his teachings. We are apprehensive, however, that we have not been able to touch all the aspects of his intense and myriad-sided spirituality, for which partly the paucity

18. T.S., pp. 299-300.

of scholarly and critical works on his teachings is responsible. From what was available, we have, in our modest way, attempted an appraisal of his realisations and teachings in the background of the cult of *Śakti*-worship (*Śakti-pūjā*) to which Vāmā belonged. We have tried to emphasise the high ideals and the ennobling spirit of devotion which inspired the saint; his lifelong devotion to the Mother Goddess, Tārā, to whom he rarely offered any formal worship; his practice of deep meditation, through which he let out the highest tone of spirituality which his self-realisation along the path of *Śakti-sādhanā* endowed him with; and his correct guidance and exhortation to his numerous disciples and admirers concerning the methods of the particular *sādhanā* in which he was an adept himself. Partly by his instincts, partly under the guidance of his saintly teacher, and partly as a fruit of his unswerving and intense devotion, he had a mastery over the *Tāntrika* path of Self-realisation, which he himself attained; its secrets he never hesitated, though in his own eccentric way, to convey to those who were genuinely eager for them. His life itself was a great and glowing example to others. As a mystic of the highest order he lived what he taught—a life in which nothing existed other than the refulgent and omnipotent Mother, protecting all those who were pure and innocent, and at whose feet he, Vāmā, had all that he wished for. That was the world to him; nothing else mattered.

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Prabhu Jagadbandhu
(1871 — 1921)

CHAPTER V

PRABHU JAGADBANDHU

1

Birth, parentage, and early life — Jagadbandhu's education — His investiture of sacred thread ceremony (*upanayana*) and his life of a *Brahmacārin* — His life of simplicity and suffering, and his association with others — Preaching of *Harināma* and uplifting of the depressed classes — Jagadbandhu called 'PRABHU' and his influence on boys — Jagadbandhu as a *Samnyāsin* — Establishment of 'Vākcar Aṅgan' — His prediction about himself — Establishment of 'Faridpur Aṅgan' — Jagadbandhu's works — Jagadbandhu's silence and a life of recluse for seventeen years — Jagadbandhu's aversion to *dīkṣā*; his preaching of the Holy Name of God; *Mahāuddhāraṇa* — Jagadbandhu breaks his silence — Jagadbandhu's attainment of the 'Thirteenth Great State' (*Trayodaśa-daśā*) — Jagadbandhu on *Mahānāma-yajña*; his passing away.

2

Jagadbandhu's cryptic language difficult for interpretation; his *Vaiṣṇava* tradition — Jagadbandhu on *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, the Supreme Reality, its different and graded scale, and methods of *sādhanā* — Jagadbandhu on *Brahman* and *Paramātman* — Jagadbandhu on *Paramātman* and *Kṛṣṇa*, the Supreme Lord — *Kṛṣṇa*, the Supreme Reality and the efficacy of the Holy Name — Jagadbandhu on *Mahāuddhāraṇa* — The practice of *Harināma* and its effects — Jagadbandhu's contribution to *Vaiṣṇava* Mysticism — Jagadbandhu on *Rāsa-līlā*; *Mahāuddharaṇa* — Jagadbandhu on Great Emancipation (*Mahāuddhāraṇa*); Free distribution of the Joy of the Self (*amṛta-vaṇṭana*).

1

Birth, Parentage, and Early Life :

Jagadbandhu, the youngest son of his parents, Dinanath Cakravarty Nyāyaśāstrī and Vāmā Sundarī, was born in the year 1871 at Dāhāpārā, a village, in the district of Murśidābād, Bengal. The native place of his father, who was a distinguished scholar of his time and a man of saintly character, had been Govindapur in the Faridpur district (now in Bangladesh), from where he had shifted his residence to Dāhāpārā. Exquisitely lovely and having a charm all his own, Jagadbandhu was the apple of his family's eye. Unfortunately, his mother died at Dāhāpārā when he was just a one-year-old child, and his father followed her six years later. His uncle, Bhairab Bābu, brought him over to the ancestral place of Govindapur and placed him in charge of his wife Rādhāmaṇi who, as misfortune would have it, also died shortly afterwards. On his aunt's death, the baby, then only three years old, was entrusted to the care of the latter's elderly cousin, Digambarī, who brought him up with motherly care and attention. The old house at Govindapur having been washed away by the currents of the mighty river Padmā, a new house had to be built at Brāhmankāndā, a suburb of the town of Faridpur. Jagadbandhu, with his elders, moved there.[1]

Jagadbandhu was by instinct religiously inclined and had a reverential turn of mind even in his boy-

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1. P.J., p. 16.

hood. He was attracted by the *Vaiṣṇava* devotees of the place (the followers of the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism), and was fond of the *Vaiṣṇava* devotional songs (*kīrtanas*) from the beginning. Though very restless in his childhood, he was never haughty by nature; he loved his playmates and treated them like brothers. His mild and smiling look and his very charming personality attracted everybody towards him. Being very simple and truthful, he loved the same qualities in others.

Jagadbandhu's Education :

On the death of his uncle in 1879, his cousins, Tāriṇī Bābu and Gopāl Bābu, took charge of him and arranged for his education. He was first sent to a local school where he received his first training in the three R's, and then to the high school at Faridpur, where he read up to the third form. Rather dreamy, absent-minded, and of a retiring disposition from his childhood, he would speak very little and was not serious about his studies. He left the school owing to an unfortunate incident caused by a misunderstanding on the part of the school authorities. He was then taken to Ranchi to live there under the care of Tāriṇī Bābu, and was admitted into the local high school there.[2]

His absent-mindedness continued and even increased during his stay at Ranchi. It is said that once, when

2. P.J., pp. 21-22.

Tāriṇī Bābu was away from home on duty, the cook, taking advantage of the absence to steal some articles from the house, and apprehensive that the boy might disclose the matter, poisoned him. Fortunately, however, he recovered from the effects of poison, through timely medical aid. Tāriṇī Bābu came to know of the incident; and feeling that it was unsafe to leave the boy alone at home, sent him to one of his relatives at Pābnā (now in Bangladesh), where in 1886 he was admitted into the District High School.[3]

Jagadbandhu's Upanayana and Life of a Brahmacārin :

Jagadbandhu's sacred thread ceremony, *i.e.*, his initiation into the Brāhminic order (*upanayana*) was solemnized at the age of thirteen, in 1884, and then onwards he lived a life of severe discipline. Always an early riser, he would finish his ablutions even before sunrise, and at noon would have his simple lunch as prescribed by the *śāstras*. It was very strange that he would never touch anybody nor allow others to touch his body, which he always kept fully wrapped up with a sheet of cloth. On account of these fastidious and incomprehensible habits, his guardians felt rather concerned about his future. Even at so young an age, he passed most of his time in meditation (*upāsanā*). His austerities, incidental to a life of rigid continence or celibacy (*brahmacarya*), purity of character, and single-minded devotion, increased by this

3. P.J., pp. 23-25.

time. He would spontaneously respect and revere the holy and pious men, and had an irresistible desire for devotional songs (*kīrtana*). The mere sound of the Holy Name of God (*Harināma*) would plunge him into a trance which would usually continue for the whole day and night.

Jagadbandhu's Life of Simplicity and Suffering, and His Association with Others :

Jagadhbandhu wore simple clothes and footwear. As he then was, he wore none of the signs of an ascetic, except for a chain of *rudrākṣa*[4] round his neck. The most remarkable thing about him was

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4. *Rudrākṣa* is the berry of a certain tree called *Rudrākṣam* (*Eliocarpus ganitrus*). This berry is used for beads by the *Saivites*. *Rudrākṣa* literally means 'eye of the god *Rudra*' (or *Śiva*). The tree *Rudrākṣam*, according to a *Śaiva* legend, grew from the spot where tears of *Rudra* (*Śiva*) fell while he was in rage (some say, in grief, and some, in ecstasy).

Great importance is attached to the number of facets on the *Rudrākṣa* beads. These slits running from end to end of each berry or head are called 'mouths' (*mukhas*).

In Punjāb, however, the term *Rudrākṣa* seems to be applied to the seeds of *jujube* tree.

Wearing beads of *Rudrākṣa* is held very auspicious among the *Śaivites*. These beads are also used for repeating a *mantra* of *Śiva*. Sometimes these are also used for reiterating *Śakti mantras*.

Skandapurāṇa may also be referred for further information on *Rudrākṣa*.

his calm and steady gaze of undisturbed peace and universal love.[5]

In this process, much time did not pass before Jagadbandhu became quite well-known as a naturally gifted man in the spiritual field, and there were many who looked upon him as a man with rare powers. Numerous people, with different ends in view, came to see and pay their respects to him. Some of them came to seek solace and strength after being baffled and exhausted by life's problems and troubled by unfavourable circumstances. Others came in search of spiritual knowledge and illumination. Jagadbandhu received everybody with great kindness and consideration and sincerely ministered to their needs. They went back from him consoled and satisfied. The distressed people were comforted and encouraged by his sympathy and sweetness, and the spiritual aspirants enlightened and inspired by his simple but highly convincing exposition of the spiritual truths.

To his schoolmates he was always the most desirable and sought-after companion; they used to flock to him in numbers; and over them, naturally, he had a remarkable influence. The elders, however, had divided opinion about him. Some thought he had an evil influence and would lead astray the boys of his own age; while others thought that under his influence their wards would develop a distaste for normal life, would leave their homes, and become ascetics. Both types of guardians, whatever their estimation of this

5. B.K., p. 37.

God-intoxicated devotee, put obstacles in the way of their wards' meeting Jagadbandhu. They did not spare even the young saint-in-the-making, and started a campaign of vilification against him. On one occasion some of them went to the length of using physical violence against him, wounding him severely and leaving him in a precarious condition at a place outside the village. Having come to know of the inhuman torture inflicted upon him, his relatives and friends began to search for him, and finding him out, took steps immediately to bring him back to his senses. They pressed him to name the miscreants, but Jagadbandhu, whose heart had nothing but love for his assailants smiled and said,

> "You need not be sorry for this petty thing. They are not to be blamed. More misery and torments are in store for me, but no one will be able to end my life."[6]

Such was the spirit of resignation, forbearance, and forgiveness that raised him in the estimation of others who came in close touch with him. One of his closest friends and associates was Hārān Faqīr, an apparently eccentric person, nicknamed Buḍā Śiva, who was actually a great saint in disguise. Jagadbandhu was so friendly and intimate in his association with this saint that he did with evident pleasure things which he had never done with anybody else, viz., eating together, lying for hours together in each

6. B.K., pp. 26-31.

other's company, and freely conversing on and discussing spiritual matters.[7]

Preaching of Harināma and Uplifting of the Depressed Classes :

In the course of time, Jagadbandhu secured a high place in the estimation of the sober people like Rājarṣi Vanamālī Roy Bāhādur, a well-known landlord and a devoted *Vaiṣṇava* of the village of Tāras, now in Bangladesh. The Rājarṣi took Jagadbandhu to his native village from where, later on, both started on a pilgrimage to Vṛndāvana. Having completed the pilgrimage, in 1888 Jagadbandhu returned to Brāhmankāṇḍā. Subsequently he paid a visit to Calcutta, where he stayed in the *Harisabhā* premises, a house where there were frequent *Kīrtana* recitals and religious discourses, in the locality known as Rāmabāgān. One of his important activities at this place was the preaching of the Holy Name of God (*Harināma*) among the *doms* (one of the poorest communities; and he created in their hearts a living interest in it. From Calcutta he went to Pābnā, and after a stay of about three months, he suddenly left for an unknown destination. At the time, only a few months remained for the commencement of the Entrance Examination, for which Jagadbandhu was supposed to appear. Jagadbandhu's connection with worldly education thus came to an abrupt end. For about a year and a half, his whereabouts were not known. He

7. B.K., pp. 32-35.

came out for the first time after this period of self-imposed seclusion in May 1890, at Jaipur, Rājputānā (now Rājasthān). He proceeded to Vṛndāvana where he stayed for a few months in the arbour (*kuñja*) and temple built by Rājarṣi Vanamālī for religious meditation. From Vṛndāvana he returned to Brāhmankāṇḍā. He preached there the Holy Name of God (*Harināma*) to the down-trodden, especially among the community known as the '*Buna*', and effected a regeneration in these low-born people.[8]

Jagadbandhu Called PRABHU *and His Influence on Boys* :

A measure of Jagadbandhu's spiritual powers, and of his progress so far, can be had from the fact that, from this time, distinguished people like Rājarṣi Vanamālī, Śyāmalāl Gosvāmin, and Raghunandan Gosvāmin (descendants of the celebrated leaders and saints of the early *Vaiṣṇava* movement, Nityānanda Prabhu, and Advaita Prabhu) began to address Jagadbandhu as PRABHU, *i.e.*, the master.[9] To them and to many others, he was no ordinary mortal, but an embodiment and incarnation of the spirit of Mahāprabhu Śrī Caitanya, the incarnation of *Rādhā* and *Kṛṣṇa*, and the great founder of the *Vaiṣṇava* movement in Bengal. Whether we believe it or not, it is said that this fact was boldly announced by a medium in a spiritualistic seance somewhere in Hooghly near

8. P.J., pp. 67-69; B. K. pp. 48-55.
9. P.J., p. 43.

Calcutta and was repeated elsewhere. But, seance or no seance, Jagadbandhu's spiritual elevation even at this comparatively young age was an indisputable fact and through his inner spiritual fire, his hold on the people who knew him was indeed very great.[10]

Jagadbandhu as a Sannyāsin :

Cutting himself off from his relatives, Jagadbandhu now decided to translate into reality what had been formerly an inner urge. He must fully live the life of a *sannyāsin*. During this time, he was constantly helped and served by the young boys, his former school-mates, who had been his constant companions in the past. Even in respect of these young boys, many of his own age, he took particular care to see that in his society the ideal of integrity and moral life was ensured for them. As a matter of fact, the lives of the boys were wholly transformed under his benign and electrifying influence. He gave consolation to many of them, and disseminated contentment unto them when in their hours of need they would come and confess to him their past misdeeds. The spirit of his message, like that of Christ and all the great saints of the world, was that it was the sin that was to be condemned and not the sinner. He instructed them to be fully ready and prepared for the householder's life, to be loyal to the Lord, meditate on Him, sing His

10. P.J., pp. 78-83.

glory, and move about vigilantly, warding off evil as soon as it came. He would ask them to lead a life of restraint, free from indulgence or thoughts of indulgence in the pleasures of the senses. The ideal of purity, selflessness, and devotion realised in the personal life of Jagadbandhu had also a deep effect upon the elders, the parents and guardians of these boys. These erstwhile vilifiers of Jagadbandhu were deeply affected by the young saint's spiritual calibre, which smoothed down the feelings of unfounded prejudice which had led them earlier to look askance at Jagadbandhu's activities and also to put obstacles in his path.

Establishment of 'Vākcar Aṅgan'

From Brāhmankāndā, Jagadbandhu moved to the village of Vākcar, where in course of time his admirers built a thatched cottage for Jagadbandhu's use, which came to be known as 'Vākcar Aṅgan'. Jagadbandhu used to spend most of his time at this place, singing devotional songs in the company of his devotees and admirers.[11]

His Prediction about Himself

Making correct divination was one of the supernatural powers which Jagadbandhu enjoyed. Once, for

11. B.K., pp. 46-47.

instance, in the presence of his admirers, he charted out his own future thus:

> "Some day you will find me in a state of senselessness and stillness resembling that of a dying person. See that at that time no wicked person comes near and annoys me. It is you who will then be the guardians of my body. I have nothing more to say."

Establishment of 'Faridpur Aṅgan' :

In 1898, another hermitage (*āśrama*) was built for Jagadbandhu, at Faridpur, called 'Faridpur Aṅgan'. The Prabhu spent the rest of his life at this place.[12] In 1901, when Calcutta was in the grip of plague which raged in epidemic form, the Prabhu happened to be present there. When all other means failed to bring the disease under control, many flocked to the Prabhu for relief and succour. To them his advice was: 'Have faith in Him; let your hearts well out in prayer; chant *Hari*'s name in chorus; the potency of the repetition of the Divine Name, sung by all in a universal chorus, is our only resort. Do it, and all troubles will be over.' It is said that the message of the holy *Harināma* spread to all corners. People took it to heart and sang it as Jagadbandhu had directed. The result was wonderful. There was an appreciable

12. P.J., p. 136.

decrease in the virulence of the disease, after which it was over completely within a short period.[13]

Jagadbandhu's Works :

At the suggestion and encouragement of Prabhu, parties for singing devotional songs (*kīrtana*) were formed at many places in East Bengal (now Bangladesh). Jagadbandhu himself composed the songs and set them to tunes. The songs became very popular and were enthusiastically sung by the parties. These and other religious writings were his successful literary endeavours, which brought out another important side of his genius. The work of song-composition went on regularly for sometime, the important and very popular among them being *Harikathā*, *Candrapāta*, and *Trikālagrantha*.

Jagadbandhu's Silence and a Life of Recluse for Seventeen Years :

In 1902, the Prabhu suddenly stopped dictating his songs, took a vow of silence, and virtually shut himself up for the long period of seventeen years in the cottage of 'Faridpur Aṅgan'.[14] From 1902 to 1907, he never came out of his cottage, but after that he would come out only for five minutes, on the

13. P.J., pp. 109-115.
14. P.J., pp. 161-178.

anniversary of his birthday. On this day, his devotees belonging to different castes and creeds, and from remote places, flocked to 'Faridpur Aṅgan' to be present on the auspicious occasion and to see the great saint.[15] In 1912, he undertook a fast for twelve consecutive days. All the self-imposed penance and mortification did not at all seem to tell upon his health.[16]

Jagadbandhu's Aversion to Dīkṣā; His Preaching of the Holy Name of God; Mahāuddhāraṇa :

Jagadbandhu never gave formal initiation (*dīkṣā*) to anybody. On the other hand, to all those who yearned for it, his advice was that they should repeat the Holy Name of God. Nothing was more efficacious than the Holy Name of God. The Holy Name would be leaven for the hearts in which the sources of spiritualism had run dry. He was averse to *dīkṣā* and preferred the practice of repeating the Holy Name of *Hari*, as in his opinion, *dīkṣā* helped only a single individual to gain his spiritual freedom, while the Name of the Lord enabled the whole world to become liberated. This universal liberation irrespective of caste, creed, or qualification, was called by him *Mahāuddhāraṇa*, *i.e.*, Universal Emancipation, the conception of which places Jagadbandhu in the illustrious band of many other immortal seers and sages.

15. P.J., pp. 179-183.
16. P.J., p. 179; B.K., pp. 141-145.

Jagadbandhu Breaks His Silence :

Jagabdandhu broke his silence and came out of his seclusion towards the beginning of the year 1919. From this day till his demise, his devotees would place him everyday in a carriage and take him around in the town, chanting his favourite *kīrtanas* while going. But the master would remain absolutely silent.

During this period nobody ever saw him doing anything in particular. He was always in a sitting or recumbent position in his room and never seemed to look at anybody. He would not speak either. When he desired to convey his needs and desires, he did so through gestures only.

Jagadbandhu's Attainment of the 'Thirteenth Great State' (*Trayodaśa-daśā*) :

In 1921, his disciples were fully convinced that Jagadbandhu had attained a very high state of spirituality, on account of which he behaved towards others just in the manner of a little child. This condition of *nirvikalpa jñāna*, which continued for some length of time, was in reality the 'Thirteenth Great State' (*trayodaśa-daśā*).[17] There is no doubt that it

17. P.J., p. 189.

Divine love in separation (*viraha*) according to the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism is of two kinds, the more developed form of which is called *prauḍha purva-rāga*, *i.e.*, the state just anterior

represents a very great spiritual eminence, it being even higher than the sufficiently elevated 'eleventh and twelfth states' (*ekādaśa* and *dvādaśa daśās*) represented in the life of the great Caitanya. Apprehending the imminent death of the great saint, his admirers and disciples arranged, in the 'Faridpur Aṅgan', and in the most solemn manner, a grand *kīrtana* party, intended to keep alive the message of their Master and even to bring him back in their midst after death, if that became necessary. It is well known among all those who pursue the path of devotion, especially the *Vaiṣṇavas*, that continuous (*akhaṇḍa*) *kīrtana*, through which the devotee's intense and unshakable devotion gushes out, has the power to effect miracles, even to bring back the dead to life.

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to God-realisation, in which the yearning in the heart of the devotee is at its highest. The stage is graded in a progressive scale indicating the relative progress made by the devotee towards the consummation of his love and devotion in the union with the Divine Being, *Kṛṣṇa*. The progressive states are usually ten in number; but it is said that the 'tenth stage' is that of *Rādhā* who is *Kṛṣṇa*'s power of bliss (*hlādinī-śakti*) perfected by union with *Kṛṣṇa*, the symbol of integral and ultimate Power. Caitanya, it is said, could reach even the 'eleventh and twelfth stages', *i.e.*, two stages higher than even *Rādhā*. Caitanya reached the stages posterior to the union of *Rādhā* and *Kṛṣṇa*. To a *Vaiṣṇava*, therefore, Caitanya is the dual incarnation of *Rādhā* and *Kṛṣṇa*. About the still higher stage, *i.e.* the 'thirteenth', precious little is known. But it is evident that the 'thirteenth stage' is higher than the incarnated bliss of the Divine Union, of which Caitanya was a great example. The 'thirteenth stage' of Jagadbandhu must, therefore, be a complete *jīvanmukta* state, with the soul becoming one with the Divine Power and Bliss.

Jagadbandhu on Mahānāma-yajña; His Passing Away :

The great *kīrtana*, which continues even today and is sung all the twenty-four hours, is known as *Mahānāma-yajña*.[18] In the year 1921, Jagadbandhu met with an accident after he had been taken out in the carriage as usual. He received serious injuries on his body. Medical help proved futile and he left this world.

2

Jagadbandhu's Cryptic Language Difficult for Interpretation; His Vaiṣṇava Tradition :

It is extremely difficult to collect and collate the materials necessary for bringing out the exact significance of what is known as the teachings of Prabhu Jagadbandhu, and to sum them up in a way easily intelligible to the modern mind. His views on the nature of Reality and its pursuit, *i.e.*, the best methods of *sādhanā*, were certainly very definite; but the cryptic language in which they are embodied stands in the way of a full and correct comprehension of their precise import. There is no doubt, however, that Jagadbandhu was steeped in the traditions of the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism. This is the reason why most of the terms used by him are unconsciously

18. P.J., p. 189.

borrowed from Vaiṣṇava Theology. But it must be understood that, even here, the terms found in his teachings have certain peculiar associations which require proper appreciation. Greater than this is the difficulty associated with his use of the terms which are invented by him. A brief note on his teachings, therefore, is all that can be attempted in this connection.

Jagadbandhu on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Reality, Its Different and Graded Scale, and Methods of Sādhanā :

The Supreme Reality, according to Jagadbandhu is *Kṛṣṇa—Kṛṣṇa* of Vṛndāvana, depicted in Vaiṣṇava Theology as associated with the blissful and divine sport in the company of His associates, of course in their deep allegorical (spiritual) connotations. He distinguishes this *Kṛṣṇa*, the son of Nanda and Yaśodā, from *Vāsudeva*, the son of Vasudeva and Devakī. This, of course, represents also the view of Caitanya and his followers. In his conversation with the leader of Brāhmo Samāja, Maharṣi Devendranath Tagore, the father of the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore, Jagadbandhu made his own position perfectly clear on this point. It appears that he is inclined to think that there is also a vital difference between *Vāsudeva* and *Paramātman* and between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Paramātman*.

The above distinction has, however, to be understood in the background of the Vaiṣṇava theological dialectics, in which it has been a moot point as to

whether *Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa* of Mathurā and *Kṛṣṇa* of Vṛndāvana should or should not be taken as identical with each other. On the whole, the most accepted view, on the basis of interpretations of passages from the *Bhāgavadgītā*, *Bhāgavata*, and similar works of the past, and among the later texts, *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha* of Jīva Gosvāmin, has been in favour of making such a distinction and giving a much higher status to *Kṛṣṇa* of Vṛndāvana than to *Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa*; the former is taken as the Supreme Creator.

On the other hand, the *Kṛṣṇa* of Mathurā is nothing more than an incarnation of the Divine descending upon this earth to relieve it of the demon Kaṁsa. Similarly we may understand the superiority of *Kṛṣṇa* of Vṛndāvana to *Paramātman*. The latter is nothing more than the manifestation of the Supreme Reality in relation to the individual soul (*jīva*) and the world of *māyā*. It is an aspect merely of the former which is indescribable, infinite and absolute, of which *Kṛṣṇa* is the full representation, realisable only by those whose hearts overflow with love and devotion. It will be evident from what is stated below from Jagadbandhu's teachings that, while drawing heavily upon the traditional Vaiṣṇava dialectic, Jagadbandhu veers away very originally in respect of his giving the supreme position to *Paramātman* and his own approach towards establishing a relationship between *Kṛṣṇa* and *Paramātman*.

Jagadbandhu's position, in this respect, will be clear from the categorisation given below, in which he gives the list of names representing the different

aspects of the Divine, arranged in an order of superiority :

(1) *Mañju* : Fish incarnation.
(2) *Kambhu* : Tortoise incarnation.
(3) *Viṣṇu* : *Rāmacandra.*
(4) *Jiṣṇu* : *Vāsudeva* not *Kṛṣṇa.*
(5) *Vidhu* : *Nārāyaṇa.*
(6) *Virāṭ* : The Universal Protector.
(7) *Turīya* : Divine Weapon.
(8) *Brahman* : *Mantra*
(9) *Paramātman* : The Supreme Creator.

Jagadbandhu on Brahman and Paramātman :

It is thus evident that *Jiṣṇu* or *Vāsudeva* stands rather low in the scale in comparison to the position of *Paramātman*. *Mañju* meditates on *Kambhu* who represents a higher Reality endowed with greater power and so on till *Brahman* is related to *Paramātman* in the act of meditation. *Paramātman* is the name given to the creator of the universe. Being superior to *Brahman*, He is called *Para Brahman*. The term *Brahman* stands here for *Śabda Brahman* or *Praṇava* or, in fact, for any particular seed-*mantra* (*bīja-mantra*), associated with *Praṇava* invoking the particular God worshipped. *Brahman* as *Śabda* is the lower aspect of *Paramātman* or *Para Brahman* which is beyond *Śabda Brahman*, and is also *Turīya* which is synonymous with the supreme destructive Power, and is symbolised by Weapon (*astra-rūpī*). Lower down in the scale stands *Virāṭ*, the cosmic body of the Universal Lord which

is responsible for the protection and sustenance of the world. *Vidhu* is, of course, identical with *Nārāyaṇa*, the Lord of *Vaikuṇṭha*; *Paramātman* as the creator of the universe stands on the borderland of the world of nature. The universal or cosmic systems being infinite, there are, in a sense, an infinite number of creators or *Paramātmans*. Not *Paramātman* alone, but all the aspects of the Divine Form, viz., *Paramātman* down to *Mañju*, are each infinite in number, *i.e.*, every cosmic system has its own *Paramātman* and *Brahman*, *Turīya*, *Virāṭ*, and so forth.

Jagadbandhu on Paramātman and Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Lord :

In the spiritual empire (*rājatva*) of Lord *Kṛṣṇa*, there are infinite cosmic kingdoms; and as administrators thereof there are infinite *Paramātmans*, infinite *Brahmans*, and infinite varieties of all the other aspects of the Divine. All these *Paramātmans*, etc., are endowed with creative, destructive, and other powers of an unimaginable variety, but none of them are able to relieve the earth of its burden of sin and sorrow. That function is the proud privilege and exclusive right of *Kṛṣṇa* and *Kṛṣṇa* alone.[19]

Paramātman pervades His entire creation, so that He may be described as omnipresent in so far as His own creation is concerned; but it is not so with *Kṛṣṇa*, who has absolutely no relation with this infinite series

19. B.K., pp. 292-295.

of creations. *Kṛṣṇa* is beyond *māyā*, and the creations are all the products of *māyā*. There can, therefore, be no relation between the two. In other words, *Paramātman* is the immanent aspect, and *Kṛṣṇa*, the transcendent aspect of the Supreme Divinity.[20]

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Reality and the Efficacy of the Holy Name :

Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Reality, though transcendent, also exists in this world—not of course in His Essence, but in His Name. Hence the importance of the repetition of His Name. It is, therefore, rightly said :

> *jei nām sei kṛṣṇa bhaja niṣṭhā kari.*
> *nāmer sahit āchen āpani śrī hari.*[21]

> The Name itself is *Kṛṣṇa* and to it be devoted with all your faith and integrity; it is the Name in which dwells the Supreme Lord (*Śrī Hari*).

To elaborate the point further, to a true *Vaiṣṇava*, *bhakti* is at once the means and the end, the *sādhana* and the *sādhya*; no human activity can be greater than this. It is *nirguṇa* in character; it is the highest virtue itself. *Bhakti* comprises nine types of activities : listening to and remembering His Name, dedicated service to the Lord, ritual worship of the Lord, obeisance to Him, serving Him as a bond-

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20. B.K., pp. 295-296.
21. B.K., p. 296.

slave, yearning about His welfare, and complete surrender of the self to Him. Among these, the efficacy of the first element finds repetition. Remembering, listening to, and repeating God's Name purge the heart of the worst vices and sins. These are so strong in their effect that even a confirmed sinner is roused to the innermost frame of his being under their impact. He feels his heart inundated with the waves of *bhakti*. But there are also certain conditions attached to them. For example, the psychology has to be attuned to the spirit of the Name, *i.e.*, all such recitals must be productive of that frame of the mind and the heart in which it is possible to contemplate on God. Moreover, *bhakti* must not be taken as the springboard for the satisfaction of any other desire. It is, as has been said, its own end (*phalasvarupa*). *Bhakti* thus pursued ends in inexpressible love (*prema*), and the merits accruing to the devotee for his practice of *bhakti* depend upon the degree of his progress to the stage of *prema*; and from person to person, these will differ accordingly. Jagadbandhu's insistence on *bhakti* and repetition of Name is basically the same as we find among the *Vaiṣṇavas*, though it has the distinction of being more charged with the yearning and solicitude for the deliverance of the entire humanity.

In his teachings Jagadbandhu lays particular emphasis on the practice of singing the Holy Name, saying that the repetition of the Name with undiluted love leads to the manifestation of *Kṛṣṇa*, expedited under the grace of Caitanya. This manifestation is a true revelation intended only for him

who sees and not for all and sundry.[22] In the practice of chanting the Name, what is needed is love, devotion, concentration, and single-mindedess. It is in this way, *i.e.*, through strict chastity and self-surrender to the Divine, that a devotee is able to overcome the domination of his senses. The strength required for this conquest does not come in the probationary stage of *sādhanā* or at the stage of *pravartaka*, but only in the advanced stage of the *sādhaka*'s spiritual progress, which follows when *Saṁkarṣaṇa*[23] helps him with the necessary power for the purpose. Jagadbandhu's emphasis on the Holy

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22. B.K., p. 297.

23. The emphasis on the potency and efficacy of the repetition of the Holy Name presupposes a dependence upon Divine Grace, which again is ascribable to the deep influence of the *Vaiṣṇava sādhanā* on Jagadbandhu. At the same time we must not forget that the *Vaiṣṇava* method, as well as the one advocated by Jagadbandhu has a special place in them for the individual efforts. The probationary stage and the *pravartaka* stage are thus the preliminary stages in the *sādhaka*'s progress towards the realisation of the Supreme *Brahman*. The true *sādhaka* stage comes only after the earlier stages have been successfully passed; and in this stage the *sādhaka* fully qualifies himself through rejection of weakness and assumption of spiritual strength, for the attainment of his cherished goal. It is at this stage that help comes to him in the form of Grace, without which no final realisation is possible. Jagadbandhu uses the name *Saṁkarṣaṇa*, standing for God, to denote the sender of the Grace. This again is an offshoot of Vaiṣṇava theology in which one of the emanations of *Kṛṣṇa* is in the form of *Saṁkarṣaṇa* or *Govinda*, one of the many forms in which He manifests Himself, the forms retaining in them His essence. *Saṁ-*

Name, it is clear, shows itself in almost all his writings and teachings.

Jagadbandhu on Mahāuddhāraṇa :

Jagadbandhu was not favourably inclined to the practice of formal *dīkṣā*, as has been already referred to. This is evident from his letter written to some of his young followers on 16th *Magha* 1306 B.S. (1900 A.D.). He was, instead, a devoted preacher of the magical efficacy of chanting God's (*Hari*) Name, which he recommended to all irrespective of caste, creed, age, or sex. He called it *Mahāuddhāraṇa* —'the Great Liberator', implying that it was capable, if universally practised, of delivering the entire world. On the other hand the spiritual formula (*mantra*) received in *dīkṣā* was intended for the spiritual welfare of only the individual who received *dīkṣā*.[24] This is certainly another unique feature of Jagadbandhu as a practical *yogin*, and as one who is true to the kindred points of heaven and home. *Dīkṣā*, or initiation, as the gateway to deliverance, has been emphasised by most of the great saints of

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karṣaṇa also happens to be one of the two primal *vyūhas*, the phases of the conditioned spirit, that directly emanate from Lord *Vāsudeva* as the *Para* aspect of the Ultimate Reality. All these above form the essential elements of the old *Pāñcarātra* school of philosophy, which was absorbed in the later *Vaiṣṇava* philosophy.

24. B.K., pp. 242-245.

India. But the fact cannot be ignored that it is an individualistic approach which promises deliverance only to a selected few, who through their faith and devotion make themselves fit to receive the grace of the *guru*. But Jagadbandhu's aim of attracting the whole of humanity to the repetition of the Holy Name of God, and making them apply heart and soul to it, is certainly a testimony to his deep faith in universal emancipation and his yearning for the welfare of everybody. In such a state, a man cannot rest content with the prospect of deliverance coming individually, but must offer a panacea for the spiritual elevation of all. So is Jagadbandhu; and in this respect he certainly reaches the great heights already reached by the savants of the past, the Buddha, the Christ, and the Caitanya.

The Practice of Harināma and Its Effects :

The fivefold result of the practices of *Harināma*, as explained by Jagadbandhu, may be stated as follows :

(*a*) It destroys sin and suffering.

(*b*) It helps the soul's awakening.

(*c*) It removes all desires and passions (*kaitava-nivṛtti*).

(*d*) It leads to the manifestation of the Divine Will (*līlā-sphuraṇa*).

(*e*) It helps universal liberation (*mahāuddhāraṇa*).

These effects of the constant chanting of the Lord's Name (*Harināma*) are well known, as we have already dilated upon them in other contexts previously. But Jagadbandhu adds one more to the effects otherwise known which we have quoted above. The sixth effect which he introduces is :

(*f*) The control (*damana*) of universal destruction (*pralaya*) which is impending.

Jagadbandhu says that the creatures of the present Dark Age (*Kaliyuga*) are just ripe for the cataclysm of destruction, than which nothing can be more fearful. It will cause universal destruction and bring the age to a sad end. The only hope for man towards warding off the dire consequences lies in his taking solely, lovingly, and devotedly to the Lord's Name, and filling the entire world with the sweet melody of the chant. This is the strongest and surest antidote to the spectre of complete annhilation.

Jagadbandhu's Contribution to Vaiṣṇava Mysticism :

The greatest original contribution of Jagadbandhu to *Vaiṣṇava* mysticism, based truly upon his personal experiences, is both critical and constructive. His thoughts and ideas on the nature, significance, and ambit of the Divine Sport (*Līlā*) are very clear and are on a par with the general *Vaiṣṇava* philosophical viewpoint, though with certain clearly original and unique features. He understands the *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* of the *Dvāpara* Age as terminating in 'Great

Sleep' (*mahāśayana*) of *Rādhā*—a sleep which knows no waking. This condition of *Rādhā*'s body becoming lifeless, and her entry with all her companions (*sakhīs*, *mañjarīs*) into the Eternal Region (*nitya-dhāma*), is regarded as her 'tenth state' (*daśama-daśā*), and is known as *Mahāviraha* or the Great Separation. *Rādhā* in this 'tenth state' is called by the name of *Daśamī*. The 'tenth' is the final state in the *līlā* enacted at Vṛndāvana. The Great Separation coming in the wake of the *Vṛndāvana-līlā* is presupposed in the *Caitanya-lilā* at Navadvīpa, in which two additional 'states' (*bhāvas*) are supplemented. These, as we have pointed out earlier, are described as the 'eleventh' and 'tenth' states (*bhāvas*) of the Great Separation (*mahā-viraha*), the tangible physical signs of which (the 'eleventh' and 'twelfth' states) respectively are : the dislocation of the joints in the body, and the transformation of the body through a contraction and swelling into a tortoise-like shape, in which all the limbs are drawn in. These two states cannot be explained away as mere aspects of the 'ninth state' of the traditional school. It is, therefore, supposed that the *Caitanya-līlā* represents a supplementary state of and an advance upon the *Vṛndāvana-līlā*, with two more *bhāvas* added to the traditional list of *ten*.

It is affirmed that Prabhu Jagadbandhu's depth of mystical experience added a '*thirteenth bhāva*' to the *twelve* already recognised, of which he was the true representative. This consisted of absolute sweetness (*mādhurya*), free from even the slightest traces of the flaunting and display of Power (*aiśvarya*). Hence the intensity of *mahābhāva* in *Rādhā*, *Caitanya*, and *Jagad-*

bandhu is relatively progressive in that order; and this is certainly an achievement of the unforgettable character of this relatively little-known mystic. The secrets of the Divine Sport (*Līlā*), in its various states and stages, at Vṛndāvana and Navadvīpa, thus become extended, and on that account more intelligible from the standpoint of Jagadbandhu's intensive and very advanced types of spiritual experiences and realisations.[25]

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25. This has a reference to the worship of Caitanya by the *Vaiṣṇavas* of the Bengal school as the dual incarnation of *Rādhā* and *Kṛṣṇa*. If *Rādhā* is the Power (*śakti*) herself, rather the Delighting Power of Love (*hlādinī-śakti*), *Kṛṣṇa* is the substratum in its infinite fullness and amplitude (*pūrṇa-śaktimat*). As *Rādhā* is incomplete without *Kṛṣṇa*, so is *Kṛṣṇa* incomplete without *Rādhā*. Moreover, *Rādhā* cannot achieve the union and fulfilment unless she has drawn within herself in all poignancy and in the deepest concentration the full gamut of universal emotions. Similarly, *Kṛṣṇa*, though He is the Ultimate Reality (*parama-puruṣa*), cannot reach the highest and attain *mahā-caitanya* unless he is united with *Rādhā*. It is only thus that in their sport in the state of perfect union, there is the true expression of the all-conquering Divine Love. The union of *Rādhā* and *Kṛṣṇa* can also be described in the light of *rasa*, which is the sum total of the Divine Being, in which case *Kṛṣṇa* is the Lord of the *rasas* (*rasarāja*), and *Rādhā*, the supreme devotional sentiment which is the highest of the states in divine love and hence is significantly called *mahābhāva*. The *mahābhāva* stage presupposes earlier stages or states, which can be reached by a *bhakta* only upon the credit of the intensity of love which he can muster in himself. There are, as a matter of fact, nine graded stages before *mahābhāva*, which rise on a progressive scale and are culminated in the *mahābhāva*. Of these nine, the last, the psychological signs of which are manifested in an

The mystic devotee in Jagadbandhu saw in *Kṛṣṇa-līlā* a new picture of the Absolute. Insight and intuition, coming in the wake of his deep absorption in *bhāva-bhakti* and *prema*, illuminated his inner being and enabled him to catch a vision of the Divine Sport, of which he did not remain a mere mute spectator but in which, at the same time, he became an active participant. Herein lies his greatness as a mystic, to understand which we need revert to his views, rather, innate convictions, about the essential purport of the *Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā Tattva*. According to Jagadbandhu, *Rādhā* returned to the Eternal Plane not

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attitude of indifference or unconsciousness, is certainly a very elevated state of *prema-bhakti*, and is to be seen only in rare devotees. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja and the other renowned exponents of the Bengal school of Vaiṣṇavism have seen in Caitanya the '*eleventh* stage', *i.e.*, one ahead of the stage reached by *Rādhā*. *Bhāva-bhakti*, which is love and devotion roused inwardly and is reached on the crescendo of an intense emotional stirring, may find its fulfilment in *prema-bhakti* in which the devotee can think of *Kṛṣṇa* as nothing else but his own. In Caitanya all the *bhāvas*, including its consummated state, *mahābhāva*, were manifested in all their totality and intensity; at the same time he was the incarnation of the loved one, *Kṛṣṇa*, too. A recent biographer on this point very pertinently remarks : " ....to the Gauḍīya-*vaiṣṇava*, Caitanya combines in himself the attributes of Kṛṣṇa, the *Rasa-rāja* and Rādhā, the *Mahā-bhāva*, the conscious *Śaktimat* with the blind love of *Śakti*. In Caitanya the limited visions of the devotees got a glimpse of the infinite mystery of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa-*līlā* ". (Majumdar, A.K. : *Caitanya His Life and Doctrine*, p. 293, Bombay, 1969). This is what we have called the '*eleventh* state' of Caitanya. Against this background, we find in Jagadbandhu a further progress to the immediately subsequent states of *bhāva-bhakti* and *prema-bhakti*.

alone but with her companions (*sakhīs*). They were devoted to the preaching of the Divine Name, and looked forward to the tasting of the Essence of Self-delight (*ātmaramaṇa*) in the subsequent *līlā* associated with the name of Caitanya and his God-intoxicated life of love and devotion. This, Jagadbandhu adds, was intended to allay the heat of the Great Separation in *Rādhā* (*daśamī* of the *mahābhāva* state) through the medium of the five essential principles (*tattvas*). Jagadbandhu further observes that on account of the incessant repetition and preaching of the Lord's Name by *Rādhā* during the period of her Great Separation, she earned *Kṛṣṇa*'s deepest gratitude, so much so that *Kṛṣṇa* regarded Himself indebted to her. It was only to release Himself from this debt that He incarnated Himself as Caitanya and peregrinated from place to place, preaching the Name of the Lord, along with the *Gopīs* of Vṛndāvana, incarnated as his followers and devoted disciples.

This original interpretation put upon *Rāsa-līlā*, and the weaving of a thread of unity between it and Caitanya's advent upon the earth, are no doubt not merely the proof of Jagadbandhu's creative intuition but at the same time the sheet-anchor of his own life as a deeply-absorbed devotee. The *Rāsa-līlā*, we know, forms the most important landmark in the religious doctrines of the *Vaiṣṇavas* of the Bengal school. In Jagadbandhu while we find a full accord with the *Vaiṣṇava* belief, we also find, thus, an extension and elaboration of the mystique of Vaiṣṇavism, which as a matter of inner intuitive realisation, raises him to the high status of the saintly

incarnations of God like Caitanya. What we need carefully mark here is Jagadbandhu's deep conviction about the eternal yearning, in the Lord's heart, to fill everybody's heart with the bliss of which He is the source and reservoir, and which is exemplified by nothing so much as the *Rāsa-līlā*. In order that this cardinal point in regard to Jagadbandhu, whose greatness depends entirely upon his receiving the Lord's Grace and becoming His instrument in the dissemination of Grace upon the devotees of the world may be clear a *resumé* of the Vaiṣṇava theology in respect of *Rāsa-līlā* may be given here.

The *Rāsa-līlā* is the Divine Sport *in excelsis*; the Lord's infinite bliss gushes out into this world through this fountainhead. One of the best descriptions of it is to be found in Jīva Gosvāmin's famous theological-cum-literary work *Gopāla Campū*, though the basic materials are drawn by him from the *Bhāgavata*. The *Rāsa-līlā*, which is the apex of *Kṛṣṇa*'s *Vṛndāvana-līlā*, takes place in the autumnal season, on a full-moon night in a beautiful grove. The milkmaids (*Gopīs*), *Rādhā*, and *Kṛṣṇa* are the participants in it. The erotic feelings and gestures 'set the ball rolling'. The choral dance then begins with *Kṛṣṇa* and *Rādhā* at the centre and the *Gopīs*, all saturated with *Kṛṣṇa*'s love, surrounding them. But the latter are not alone; with each milkmaid there is a *Kṛṣṇa*. The first ensemble then breaks up, with the milkmaids retiring from the scene, leaving behind *Kṛṣṇa*, *Rādhā*, and a few other *Gopīs* who have become *Kṛṣṇa*'s eternal love. Other dances follow, and finally *Kṛṣṇa* and *Rādhā* are left to themselves, and they

then merge in each other. This unity created out of duality is also the emergence and manifestation of the ultimate and supreme *Rasa.* In His merger with *Rādhā*, *Kṛṣṇa* thus becomes the well-spring and sum and substance of *rasa* itself, seen as a great monistic principle (*advaya-rasa-tattva*). The *parama-puruṣa* that *Kṛṣṇa* is, He is bliss incarnate. His assumption of the human form and His amorous sport in the groves (*kuñja*) of Vṛndāvana are His acts of infinite mercy for His devotees on the earth. Jīva Gosvāmin in his book named above warns the reader that the Lord's pastime is to be understood in its real heavenly significance. What is *Rādhā* but an incarnation of *Kṛṣṇa* Himself ? She is His seminal principle of bliss. At the same time she is the symbol of *Kṛṣṇa*'s serving principles. The milkmaids who partake of the bliss of *Rāsa-līlā* are nothing else but projections of *Rādhā* in multiple forms. The sport in which these divine beings indulge is spiritual through and through. What greater evidence of spirituality can there be than the fact that *Kṛṣṇa*, the Supreme Being, is at once the source and partaker of the Bliss ? *Rādhā*'s beauty, tenderness, and fervour of love are all His own. It is the consciousness of this which produces in Him the ecstatic love which beggars all description. This joy is expressed through the choral dance. To sum up, the intrinsic power (*svarūpa-śakti*) of the Lord is directly manifested in the *Rāsa-līlā*.

Jagadbandhu on Rāsa-līlā :

Jagadbandhu's view on the *Rāsa-līlā* is also highly interesting though basically he is guided by the theo-

logy of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism described above. *Kṛṣṇa* is to him the gushing and ever-alive fountain of the infinite and universal joy. His desire for total self-distribution finds its expression in the *Rāsa-līlā.* The origin of this *līlā*, according to Jagadbandhu, is from the incessant yearning for immanence in the Divine, for He wants that all should partake of His joy and none be deprived of. Certainly Jagadbandhu knew through intuitive experiences that the *Rāsa-līlā* was going on eternally, so that its bliss could be shared by the entire creation.

There are further points of correspondence between Bengal Vaiṣṇavism and Jagadbandhu's views, though almost everywhere, as we have already said, there are attempts at carving out new avenues of significance in the *Kṛṣṇa*-love (*Kṛṣṇa-rati*). For example, he says that union with *Kṛṣṇa*, which is the inspiring essence of *Rāsa-līlā* is possible only when the heart is free from all traces of selfish and egoistic desires. *Rādhā* represents Divine Love — pure, disinterested, intense, and ever-flowing. Her *mahābhāva* means exactly this. She is in fact represented as the essential counterpart of *Kṛṣṇa*, and it is for this reason that while every other being or object falls under the category of *prakṛti*, limited within the boundaries of the created world, she does not. In her, therefore, there is no question of gratifying the self. For this reason, She is the best qualified associate of *Kṛṣṇa* in the blissful play, leading to the eternal union with Him in the privacy of the semi-sylvan surroundings (*nikuñja*).

The crux of the *Rāsa-līlā* is thus the principle that *Kṛṣṇa* wants to see the overflow of the joy of His own Being to inundate the heart of every other soul, and that is why in the bliss ineffable of the *Rāsa*-dance, He wants each companion of *Rādhā*, *i.e.* the young milkmaids (*Gopīs*) of Vṛndāvana, to be His partner, but as it is, the *Rāsa-līlā* cannot take place unless *Rādhā* were *Kṛṣṇa*'s partner, the former being the essential (*sāra*) and fundamental attribute of the Supreme Energy of Bliss (*hlādinī-śakti*). *Kṛṣṇa* is no doubt the Ultimate Reality (*parama-puruṣa*); yet to reach the level of Superconsciousness (*mahācaitanya*), the highest stage, above the state of the purest and most divine emotion (*mahābhāva*), He would never succeed unless it were after His union with *Rādhā*, the *śakti* herself in the fullest amplitude. The only way of escape out of this anomalous position is, as Jagadbandhu says, that every heart desirous of union with *Kṛṣṇa* should cherish in it the ideal of *Rādhā* and mould and elevate itself accordingly. Else the heart would yearn in vain, and the Desired One would always ignore it. The purest spiritual stream must overflow the heart and mind in order that the worldly man may reach this state. The least emergence of carnal desire (*kāma*) and self-love, the reproaches of man's earthly existence, stands in the way of the union, so that there arises, as a consequence of this emergence, an inevitable separation from the Divine Beloved. The position of every *Gopī*, significantly described as the other form or forms of *Rādhā* (*kāyavyūha*), indeed of every soul, is that of complete subservience to *Rādhā*, in whom is collected all the

poignancy of the entire realm of universal emotion and yearning, without which the disappearance of Lord from the *Līlā* is inevitable.

Jagadbandhu's teaching in this context is emphatically categorical about the absolute necessity of the elimination of ego. It is a time-honoured principle, repeated again and again by the ancient Indian scriptures, that any sign of conceit or ego is the negation of God. God, the Supreme Being and the Ultimate Reality, cannot brook the exhibition of egoism in any shape or form. With egoism appearing, God is bound to disappear. Even on the divine level, egoism may rear its ugly head, and Jagadbandhu finds a demonstration of it even in the midst of *Rāsa-līlā*. This is certainly a point where Jagadbandhu strikes a note of originality. He points out that there is evidently a rise of the self-seeking impulse in the *Gopīs* at *Rāsa-līlā*. This is nothing but their having become the victims of the spell of desire, which is certainly reprehensible, and doubly so in those who are seeking union with the Lord. The retribution comes soon in the disappearance of the Lord. The effect of this disappearance, however, is the mitigation of the ego-sense of the *Gopīs* by Divine Grace (*amṛta*). The weeping of the *Gopīs* in this situation, their ceaselessly displaying the pangs of separation is, therefore, held to be, in Jagadbandhu's teachings, the proper way to recover our lost Ideal. It is by the teardrops welling out of our heart that we can purify ourselves; these are our most effective prayers to the Lord for His mercy.

Jagadbandhu on Rāsa-līlā and Mahāuddhāraṇa :

Jagadbandhu poses the question : why is it that in the final stages of the *Rāsa*-dance, most of the dancing companions, the milkmaids (*gopīs*), are dismissed ? Answering it himself he says that it is thus clear that even in *Rāsa* all the souls are not able to have a share in the enjoyment of the *Rāsa*-dances. Jagadbandhu further says that in view of the prodigious number of human souls, the majority are deprived of the blessings of Divine Joy. The occurrence and process of Universal Liberation (*Mahāuddhāraṇa*), about which we find indications in the life and teachings of Caitanya, assume a supreme importance against this apparently frustrating background. The Sport of Divine Love in the bowers and groves (*kuñja* and *nikuñja*) of Vṛndāvana is the highest Ideal to which the loving soul looks up and for which it aspires. But the persistent evil of ego causes a great number of human souls (*jīvas*) to be debarred from it. And we know that at Vṛndāvana, even *Candrāvalī*, who was second only to *Rādha* in love and devotion, and one of her *nitya-siddha sakhīs*, *i.e.*, those in whom the love of God is endless, is also deprived of it. She is unable to maintain and cherish in her heart the ideal of *Rādhā* and loses *Kṛṣṇa* as a consequence. *Candrāvalī*'s love of *Kṛṣṇa* is based upon considerations of her own enjoyment; it does not rise to the level of true divine love (*aprākṛta kāma*), while in the case of *Rādhā* the only objective is to dedicate herself at *Kṛṣṇa*'s feet for *His Joy*, and that is exactly what *mahābhāva*, of which she is the embodiment, represents.

Jagadbandhu on Great Emancipation (*Mahāuddhāraṇa*); *Free Distribution of the Joy of the Self* (*Amṛta-vaṇṭana*) :

Free distribution of the Joy of the Self (*amṛta-vaṇṭana*), as Jagadbandhu encouragingly points out, is a process of God's activity aiming at satisfying every soul by bringing to it the object of its longing, viz., the Joy of the Divine Union. Its first aspect reveals itself in the Conquest of Desire, described as *madana-vijaya* within the Circle of *Rāsa* (*Rāsa-maṇḍala*) during the great *Rāsa-līlā*, which means that the nucleus of life has to be completely changed. Spirituality, love, and devotion in their purest forms must form the substratum of life. All earthly joys and temptations, therefore, are to be totally annihilated, to facilitate the emergence of the pure spiritual being. Ego must be burnt away so that an all-consuming love of God possesses the soul.

If this be the first aspect of Divine Love, the second aspect is found, according to Jagadbandhu, in *khaṇḍitā*; by this is meant the state of *Rādhā* at the time when she discovered certain marks on *Kṛṣṇa*'s body, proving that He had spent the night with another female companion. While on the part of the Lord, it is nothing but an aspect of His sport (this being merely a stratagem on His part to test the intensity of *Rādhā*'s love); on *Rādhā*'s part this is a state of unbearable pain caused by the sentiment that she and Her Lord have been rent asunder. But the pain simply makes her love more intense and

Her submission to Him all the deeper. The Lord smiles in approval and is united with Her again. This, as Jagadbandhu sees, is exactly our state. We have to attune ourselves to the psychology of the woman who has been cut off from her loved one (*khaṇḍitā*), especially like *Rādhā*, and accelerate the process of our union with the Lord. We have strayed away, a long way, from our Supreme Abode. But the return journey with God's Grace upon us is not impossible. Love and self-surrender must light our path back home.

But the process has not yet been brought to a successful completion. The joys intended by God to be the common possession of the entire creation were experienced for the first time only by the *Gopīs* of Vṛndāvana who were in close touch with *Kṛṣṇa* and who possessed feelings of unbounded love for Him. These experiences occurred in the deepest recesses of solitude within the limits of Vṛndāvana. It is to be remembered, however, that even in such a situation, some were deprived of the blessings. Aeons have passed since then, and the dimensions of life have extended beyond measure in the meantime. As complexities of life have increased, so have sin and suffering become more extensive and intense. But the yearning for God has not only not ceased, but has become deeper owing to the increasing pain of existence. God in His infinite beatitude, too, has eternally looked forward to a release of the entire universe from darkness. To Jagadbandhu's intuition, therefore, it is vouchsafed that the time for the release and redemption of the universe has come

now. It is here that the importance of the special message of Jagadbandhu comes in. It is clear from a close survey of Jagadbandhu's works, letters, and songs, although these are very abstruse in nature and very difficult to comprehend, that the true purpose of this advent is the propagation of the gospel of Universal Emancipation (*Mahāuddhāraṇa*). To his fellow-men his mode of life itself is an eye-opener, and the signal-post directing them onward along the path of absolute love and devotion, with a life reduced to its essential purity by self-abnegation and self-surrender. The prophet and mystic thus get harmonised in his being and he is certainly in the great company.

CHAPEER VI

HUZUR MAHĀRĀJ

Huzur's family lineage — His education and literary works — Huzur, a born saint — Huzur's spiritual enlightenment; his austerities; his spiritual ideals and the path to God-realisation — Huzur's travels — Huzur's personality and powers — Huzur, a *Qutb* — His death — The salient features of his spiritual life — The *Ṣūfī* mystical ideals.

Huzur's Family Lineage :

Hazrat Syed Shah 'Alī 'Abdul Qader Shamsul Qader Hazrat Syed Shah Murshid 'Alī Al-Qaderi, popularly known as Huzur to his disciples, was born in 1858 A.D. in the town of Midnapore, on the border of Bengal and Orissa. He hailed from the illustrious family to which Hazrat Ghaus-ul-Azam, one of the greatest Muslim saints of the world, belonged.[1] He

1. Hazrat Ghaus-ul-Azam (literally, the greatest of all helpers) of Jilani, Persia, belonged to the eleventh century A.D. He was enjoying high spiritual illumination, over and above being a great preacher, a scholar, a practical moralist, and a

was born on the most auspicious Night of Power (*Shab-i-Qadr*).[2]

In the family of Hazrat Ghaus-ul-Azam, as fifteenth in descent from him and twenty-seventh from Hazrat Resalat Panahi, was born one 'Abdul Qader 'Abdullāh, who had his home in the sacred city of Baghdad. In 1705 A.D. (1111 A.H.), 'Abdul Qader migrated to Delhi, the Moghul capital of India. After a short stay in the capital he returned to Baghdad, but his two sons (Hazrat Syed Shah) Zaker 'Alī and

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great philanthrophist. He was called the Sultan of the *Walis*; and he exercised his miraculous powers, attained along the path of the *Ṣūfīstic* God-realisation, only for the benefit of distressed persons. His exemplary asceticism was a by-word of the day and when he died, he left behind him a large number of disciples and admirers.

2. Literally, the Night of Power. According to the Tradition, it is the most auspicious night when prayers are granted, and when the refulgent celestial light bathes the earth. From all that is known, the night is perhaps the 23rd or 24th in the month of Ramazān. Though it is a very holy night, its origin is unknown. " The word al Kadr signifies *power* and *honour* or *dignity*, and also the *divine decree*; and the night is so named either from its excellence above all other nights in the year, or because, as the Mahammedans believe, *the divine decrees* for the ensuing year are annually on this night fixed and settled, or taken from the *preserved table* by God's throne, and given to the angels to be executed. On this night Mohammed received his first revelations; when the Koran, say the commentators, was sent down from the aforesaid table, entire and in one volume, to the lowest heaven, from whence Gabriel revealed it to Mohammed by parcels, as occasion required ."

The Koran, edited by George Sale, p. 451, London.

Raushan 'Alī stayed in India, the former moving to Bengal and the latter to Tirhut (Bihar). 'Abdullāh left behind numerous disciples in India, of whom the famous Maulana 'Abdul Haque Muhaddis of Delhi was one.

After having moved from place to place, Zakir 'Alī decided to settle at Magalkote, thirty miles from Murśidābad. It was then a flourishing town, being a centre of commerce and industry and a seat of great learning. It was also the location of the office of the Supreme Judge (*Qāzi-ul-Quzat*), a favourite place of residence of the rich *'Umarā* and *'Ulamā'* greet and abode of great saints to whom pilgrims came from far and near.

Zakir 'Alī, being a prominent mystic of his time, became a great spritual guide (*pīr*). He possessed miraculous powers to elevate spiritually the earnest seekers who flocked to him. His dedicated task, to aid and succour the needy and the distressed, expressed itself in the activities of healing the diseased, reviving the dead, praying to God on behalf of less fortunate souls, and consoling the poor and the needy. These were very ordinary actions for him performed with his extraordinary powers. It is said that his power of spiritual transformation was so effective that even great sinners were reformed and made eminent saints through his grace. He continued this activity for his long lifetime. At the time of his passing away, he communicated all his spiritual powers to Tufail 'Alī, his nephew and son-in-law.

Tufail 'Alī, too, was distinguished by saintliness, and was a spiritual guide (*pīr*). On account of his great sanctity, he was known as *Qutb-i-Rabbani* (the lord among the *qutbs*). People of all castes and creeds flocked whenever they were in the midst of problems and difficulties which, they knew, the *pīr* could solve very easily. The latter never disappointed them. He too had extraordinary powers similar to those of his immediate precursor. He was married to the daughter of the great saint, Hazrat Candan Shahid of Midnapore. This marital union was highly conducive to his spiritual progress. Having married, Tufail 'Alī settled at Midnapore and lived there for a long time making many disciples. Apprehending that his last days were near, he left Midnapore for Mangalkote, but before reaching his destination, his illness was seriously aggravated on the way owing to the rigours of the journey, and he died. Just before his death, his son, Meher 'Alī, reached there, and Tufail 'Alī imparted his own spiritual gifts to his son, and left the body.

Meher 'Alī known as 'Ala Huzur settled at Midnapore, the residence of his mother. He started a school for Islāmic studies (*madrasah*), and built a simple house (*khānqah*) in Miabazar, about a mile from the heart of Midnapore. He also had great spiritual powers. It is said that his body was so luminous that the light emanating from him made his face visible, even at night, and illumined everything within it. He is said to have extraordinary *yogic* powers and his body was found to assume at times unusual tallness or

leanness. He commanded wonderful powers of will, too, and was able to bring even the dead to life. With a soft and affectionate heart he never failed to help in any way possible the needy people. One of the most important miracles associated with his name was the instant reaching of a place that was at a long distance. But he demonstrated this capacity only to come to the help of people who really deserved his help.

Murshid 'Alī, called also Huzur Purnoor, or only Huzur, was the third child of Meher 'Alī; the first two children were daughters. He is said to have been a born saint, in the *Ṣūfī* nomenclature called *walī*, who reached the status of a *qutb* as he grew up into a spiritually elevated person.

His Education and Literary Works :

It is believed that Hazrat Ghauspak, a learned spiritual preceptor of the time with extraordinary powers, himself took charge of his education when he grew up. Huzur obtained mastery of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu. He studied and mastered, among other things, the Muslim Tradition (*Hadis*), Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), Principles of Jurisprudence, (Uṣūl-i-Fiqh.), Logic, and other subjects. He became master of all branches of knowledge, as he possessed the knowledge from God (*'Ilm-i-Ladunni*).[3]

3. G.A., p. 135.

As he got mastery over languages and other sciences, he also developed his talent of writing creatively. He wrote a *Divan* in Urdu consisting of religious *ghazals* or odes in praise of the glories of the Divine, of the Prophet, and of the recognised holy people and saints.[4] In this way his *ghazals* were composed also upon Hazrat 'Alī and others including Hazrat Ghaus-ul-Azam, the great *walis* of illustrious memory. The odes on the last are naturally the most predominent and inspired. The collection of these deeply religious poems is accepted as a very valuable and interesting work shedding light on the doctrines of *Ṣūfīsm* or Islāmic mysticism. It is accepted by his admirers and disciples as a work inspired by nothing short of Divine revelation. Huzur was intelligent and had a powerful memory. He did not require to read his lessons more than once in order to know them by heart and retain them therein. He was not only a good writer but also a very good interpreter. He had a very good collection of books and manuscripts.

Huzur, a Born Saint :

It has already been observed that Huzur was a born saint and had wonderful spiritual powers even in his childhood. It is said that when he was a boy of six or seven, he was in the habit of secretly

4. M.H., pp. 13-14.

visiting the solitary places which were far away from the reach of men; very often he would retire to the lonely bushes on the bank of the Kasāi or Kamgsābatī river, where he would sit in the shade of a tree, rapt in meditation. It is said that, under the instruction of his *guru* Ghauspak, he did not hesitate to go through even the most painful ordeals in order to discipline himself through self-mortification.

As he became spiritually enlightened even while young, the responsibility of administration and looking after the spiritual welfare of a great fraternity, which his father had built, fell upon Huzur's tender shoulders in his sixteenth year, when his father left this world. Meher 'Alī, according to the custom followed by the spiritually disposed families, just before his death had imparted to his son all the great spiritual gifts of which he was in possession. These powers came down in lineal succession from Hazrat Resalat Panahi and Hazrat Ghauspak to Huzur.

People who came into close contact with Huzur were wonder-struck when they realised that a divine halo floated round Huzur's face and a sweet and delicate fragrance emanated from his body. His breath was like a balm and anodyne, healing and relieving one of pain and lassitude. Just as Huzur was all light, so was Hazrat Ghauspak, Huzur's teacher and guide — one was a spark, while the other was a conflagration. Huzur knew himself to be identical in essence with the Hazrat. He considered himself to be the body of which the soul was Hazrat Ghauspak.

Huzur's Spiritual Enlightenment; His Austerities, Spiritual Ideals and the Path to God-realisation :

Huzur passed through a course of austerities after his father's death. He kept a vigil of forty nights in succession at the shrine of his father, and retired to the nearby wilderness early each morning. When this period of forty days of austerities was over, he stayed on barefoot in the barren and wild place, eating rarely and without sleep. During this period, he used to come everyday at midnight to the shrine, wearing a coarse woollen cloak, the dress of a *Ṣūfī*, sewn with the prickly seeds of olive fruits within.[5] He used to move about from time to time in strict silence on the fringe of the forest. He took upon himself a number of penances in order to purify his soul. Some of the penances he underwent were extremely painful. Sometimes he passed the whole night with his body suspended from the ceiling of the house and head swinging downwards. Blood used to drip down from his mouth and nostrils. There were many other penances which he deliberately performed. The place where the penances were done by him is now marked by a beautiful mosque. Thus his solitary pursuit of renunciation and self-purificatory penances formed an important part of his spiritual life, full of austerities of some kind or the other.[6]

The path of renunciation, penance, abstinence, and self-mortification is commonly accepted by all *Ṣūfī*

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5. This was intended to prevent sleep.
6. G.A., p. 136.

mystics as the royal road to spiritual progress. The path of mortification is technically known as *Ṣalāt-i-Ma'kusi*.[7] At first the emphasis on bodily austerity by the early *Ṣūfīs* was a part of their theosophy, which led them to give the greatest consideration to the doctrine of depravity of the human nature and the consequent liability for punishment in hell-fire. Later on, however, the emphasis on self-mortification became more tolerant. The spiritual path was supplemented by love and devotion, on the basis of religious speculation that man must love God, as He is supremely lovable. Man is said to be the lover and God is the beloved — an analogy which is found in the *Vaiṣṇava* faith too. Regarding the strenuous and stringent course of self-discipline which the *Ṣūfīs* emphasise, we must understand that this discipline to a *Ṣūfī* is a very necessary prelude to his journey towards his spiritual goal. Man is understood to be a true pilgrim (*sālik*) and his journey is long and arduous. It is said that he has to pass through seventy thousand veils that separate him from his beloved Creator. These veils represent the impermanent and illusory matter which weighs upon the soul in the world, making the soul lose its pristine purity and power, while reducing it to a lower grade (*nafs*). The lower level of the soul is liable to act as a hindrance to the journey to God, and it cannot be tamed unless it is subdued and purified through penance and austerity. On man's ability to subdue it depends his success in the journey, his crossing over the dark regions, and his entry into the

7. M.H., p. 19.

bright realm where the soul regains its original purity and integrity. Thereafter, the passage is illumined by Divine Grace and the final goal is reached. Hence a *Ṣūfī*'s spiritual journey begins with his own efforts at self-purification and subjugation of the dark forces of the worldly impediments which hamper his progress. Of course, this motivation is not possible unless it is blessed with the correct guidance and encouragement from a qualified and holy teacher.

Huzur's Travels:

After getting the full spiritual enlightenment Huzur made extensive travels all over India. In the course of these travels, he did not stay anywhere except at the tombs of *walīs* and shrines of *qutbs*. It is believed that he wrought a number of miracles on his journey in favour of people who craved his help. It is said that Huzur heard even moans from the graves, in supplication of his help. These ghostly voices came from the spirits lying buried there, who were in sore distress and were praying for the spiritual aid Huzur was capable of rendering; Huzur responded to the supplication, and breathed out sentiments of spiritual healing.

After the travels were over, Huzur settled in Calcutta. His main contribution to the spiritual life of the local community, and of the public in general, comprised the working of miracles for the physical, as well as the spiritual, ills of the people, thus

bringing men in touch with God. He was very liberal in his outlook; people of all social and religious groups had equal admiration for his great spiritual eminence, and they flocked to him for moral and spiritual sustunence like 'sheep searching after the shepherd.' Huzur's personal life was simple and poor, absolutely free from ambitions and hankerings for wealth. He lived in the midst of external splendour no doubt, for, his admirers would never allow him to live otherwise, but he had no attraction for it. He used only earthen vessels as his utensils, and slept on bare ground, without any mattress or bedding. A plain garment (*pairahān*) was all that he required for covering his body. He observed holy fasts during the year very frequently. Thus he did not eat at all on several occasions in a whole month and even when he ate, his meal was very simple. In the evening he took only a little plain drink (*sharbet*) and a few morsels of grain soaked in water, and at midnight he took a little ordinary food. This shows that his life was spent in the practice of austerities.

Huzur's Personality and Powers:

Huzur had an inimitable personality endowed with all the good qualities which are usually attributed to saints. All of them—physical, moral, and spiritual—wonderfully harmonised in him that he had a charming, soft, but dignified appearance, and there was a glow of divine consciousness in his countenance. It was so prominent, that even those who came to him for

the first time, felt it and were charmed by it whenever they approached him. His personality was charming and sweet, radiating universal love and affection. Whoever came in touch with him could not but feel a ripple of joy in his heart, and at the same time could not help being irresistibly drawn towards him. He did not live for himself, but only for others. His whole life was turned into a hanmony of the entire universe. Love of God in which he had reached perfection reflected itself in his relation with his fellowmen. This was possible because he was dead to all earthly desires. No life could be better than his in abstinence, renunciation, and self-abnegation. He used to say that even his penances and austerities — indeed all his sufferings — were for the good of his disciples. He was kind and hospitable to all and in his eyes the rich and the poor were all alike. He had no hatred and repulsion even for the lepers whom he embraced with his hands. In this respect he certainly belonged to the glorious company of the greatest souls of the world, the Buddha, the Christ, Caitanya, and others. He was very sensitive, and never wounded the feelings of other people, however sinful they might be. His charity and generosity knew no bounds, and his resignation to the will of God was so complete that it could not be believed unless seen. Like a true *Ṣūfī* he did not attach himself to earthly things, all illusory and distracting, and he was intensely forbearing in nature. As regards his powers, it is just enough to say that he acquired mastery even over natural powers. It is said that he had the power of multilocation to appear in the

same person at different places at one and the same time. He knew exactly when a person would die; and when he found the time was inauspicious or ominous for somebody, he could even change it into a better one. This was particularly true in regard to his anxiety about the weal of his disciples, for he used to say :

> "A *pīr* is but an imperfect *pīr* who does not know when his *murid* (disciple) will die".

He also expressed his opinion that a disciple did not need to narrate his grievances and difficulties openly to the *pīr*, because these were already known to him. The great sweep of Huzur's powers can be seen from the fact that he knew not only the human language, but also that of the animal kingdom. He had an exact prescience of all that would happen in the life of each of his disciplies. He is said to have been a *vāk-siddha,* a seer whose pronouncement never came untrue, so that whatever he said, even if it was in jest, was fulfilled. He loved his disciples so equally and intensely that he never felt any difference between one and the other.

Huzur, a Qutb :

In view of the fact that primary materials on Huzur's biography and his spiritual attainments are very scanty, it is difficult, nay, almost impossible, to estimate the greatness of Huzur's spiritual perfection. His miraculous powers do indicate that his spiritual

attainments were remarkable, but it is impossible to speak with any degree of confidence and exactitude on the extent of divinisation of a man from an expression of his powers. His admirers have, however, been always inclined to the view that he passed far beyond the stages of *fanā* and *baqā* and became a *qutb* of his time.[8]

The estimate given above, places Huzur Mahārāj in the highest plane of the *Ṣūfī* saints and mystics. He became a *qutb*, *i.e.*, he reached the highest state possible to a *walī* in the path of union with the One. Analogous to the state of a *siddha* in the Hindu concept of saintly elevation, the *qutb* not merely realised the cherished unity with the Creator, but also became fit for holding the reins of the administration of the divine rule over this world. In a word, partly by his own efforts with the able guidance of a competent *pīr*, and partly by God's Grace, he had elevated himself to sainthood. This elevation was a gradual and prolonged process of discipline, love, and devotion, through which the veils of the illusory world were successively rent asunder, leading the seeker along the path of sainthood (*walī*) to the final and complete realisation of his essential oneness with God. A part of this journey depended upon deliberate and voluntary effort, called *maqām*, which constituted the stages of the journey. When this part had been completed, the next part was purely a psychological state (*hāl*) of spiritual feelings and dispositions that were involun-

8. G. A., p. 137.

tary, which came as a token of Gods' Grace. If the stages in the first part of the journey in which the *Ṣūfī* seeker attempts at the necessary self-preparation through the successive practice of the disciplines of repentance (*taubah*), abstinence (*wara'*), piety (*zuhd*), poverty (*faqr*), patience (*ṣabr*), trust in God (*tawakkul*), etc., the end towards which he directs himself is the annihilation of the illusory parts of our existence, which dwell in the ego, in order to become rich in God. It is not destruction of individuality, but rather liberation of the essence of life from the insubstantial worldly attributes. It is this stage, known as *fanā*, which literally would mean 'annihilation'. It is consequent upon this stage that the state of *baqā*, literally 'subsistence', comes, when the *Ṣūfī* has the great realisation that God is his only home, and God's will is his will. The purity (*ṣafā*) attained through self-discipline entitles him to the *baqā* state. The *qutb* is, however, the highest state.

His Death:

This great saint passed away in February, 1901 in Calcutta. It is said that before his demise he had turned away seven times the Angel of Death (*Malak-al-Mawt*), and that he left his body at his own will. Several years before the event, he had forecast to the people the exact hour, day, month, and year of the end of his worldly existence. After his death, his body was taken to Midnapore and buried there

by the side of the tombs of his parents. A beautiful mausoleum has since then been erected over the site.

The Salient Features of His Spiritual Life:

Like a true mystic contemplating on the illusions of ego, Huzur said that the best way for the spiritual wayfarer journeying towards Divine realisation was the way of freeing oneself from worldly desires of every kind. A man, he said, ought to be able to taste death or annihilation before the quietus actually came. Thus what he emphasised was the completion of the *fanā* part in the stages of the *Ṣūfī*'s spiritual journey, to which we have referred above. This shows that, in his opinion, attainment of true life was preconditioned by the aquisition of the ability to quit the body at will, with the consciousness intact.[9] But what does this annihilation actually mean? Does it mean just a romantic death-wish? Or does it convey the same meaning as the Buddhist *nirvāṇa*? Or is it the same as the essential and integral knowledge gained by Naciketa (mentioned in the *Kaṭhopaniṣad*) through an encounter with the Lord of Death? The truth of the matter is that the case is not exclusively either of the above-mentioned states, though it has something of all that is said. It is, in fact, a typical *Ṣūfī* approach to God-realisation. It is certainly not a call for quixotic adventures for the unknown and

9. M. H., p. 23.

mysterious. Being essentially related to the Islāmic faith, it has nothing to do with the so-called metempsychosis, the freedom which is the most important fruit of *nirvāṇa* according to the Buddhist. It is neither exclusively a pursuit of knowledge, as in the case of Naciketa. What Huzur emphasised was the conquering of the human passions entangling the ego through deliberate self-discipline, in order to facilitate the seeker's hastening towards the fullness of Eternal Life.

Huzur laid great emphasis on a disinterested service of God, neither expecting reward in Heaven nor fear of punishment in Hell. Concerning this aspect of his teachings, once again what we note is his alignment with the cream of *Ṣūfī* theology. As a matter of fact, Islāmic eschatology, with its excessive syncretism, appears to be extremely confusing. So going into the details of the matter is liable to make confusion grow even worse. We can, however, safely try to understand it by considering the basic postulates. The very term *Islām* means 'absolute submission' and 'resignation to God', or in other words, having peace with Him. Resignation implies a complete liquidation of the egoistic attachments through faith and devotion, repentance, and renunciation. Success in this ensures a place in one of the seven heavens, according to the degree of success; whereas a failure in this regard brings upon man torture and damnation in hell. All this is going to be finally judged on the Day of Reckoning. The *Ṣūfīs* have all along believed in what two of the early *Ṣūfī* saints said :

"I have not served God, out of the fear of hell,
for I should be a wretched hireling if
I served Him out of fear;
nor for love of heaven for I should be a bad
servant if I served for what was given;
I have served Him only for love of
Him and desire for Him."

"We count all torments more desirable than that of being veiled from Thee, for when Thy beauty is revealed in our hearts, we reckon tribulation as nought."[10]

Huzur's views stated above are inspired by this great tradition of undiluted and exclusive faith and devotion. His own life was modelled upon this tradition, and he inspired and exhorted others to do the same.

To serve God is to act for God Himself; *i.e.*, there is no extraneous motive in this service, no pride, and no egoistic interest. There is only a disinterested love of God. A devotion inspired by absolute resignation to His Will alone matters. Therefore, Huzur says that one has to seek Him alone, live for Him, and long for Him. The truest object of longing is for the perennial union with God, conceived as the Eternal Beloved who is Ever-young, Ever-fresh, and Ever-new, the One, the True, the Perennial, and the Never-ending Source of Ineffable Bliss.[11]

Huzur's entire life was a devotional offering to Him, and by his inspiring personal example and his

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10. Quoted by Tritton, A.S.: *Islam*, London. 1951, p. 91.
11. M. H., p. 23.

persuasive teachings, he built round him a devoted band of admirers and disciples, who boldly copied the path of devotion led by the light of Huzur's enlightened personality.

In reply to the question, how men of the world should conduct themselves in order to be able to realise God, he said that even earthly pursuits should be followed only for God and for God alone.[12] This was the only way, he said, which could buttress up the spiritual foundation of a man and rouse his heart with energy and confidence.

As regards the secret of his wonderful powers of knowledge, he once said, in reply to a question put to him, that persons who were really in touch with God and were engaged in His service had access to all His secrets, while others are debarred from them.[13]

The Ṣūfī Mystical Ideals :

The *Ṣūfī* movement has all along been inspired by the mystic ideals of devotion and love of God aiming

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12. M.H., pp. 23-24.
This statement of Huzur reminds us of a similar statement occurring in the beginning of *Īśa Upaniṣad*, where it is said that all the aspirations and activities of a man, indeed everything with which he comes in touch or which emanates from him, should be spread over and suffused with the idea of God. The statement is :

īśāvāsyamidaṁ sarvaṁ yat kiñca jagatyām jagat.

13. M.H., pp. 80-81.

at the realisation of the eternal nexus between spiritual and personal values. Though it has displayed a sort of cosmopolitanism and eclecticism, drawing inspiration from Christian mysticism, Neoplatonism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, *Ṣūfīsm* has also charted out its own distinct path, and has in all cases begun with typically Islāmic presuppositions. More often than not, the *Ṣūfī* path of God-realisation has been one of unspoilt innocence and purity, going almost to the point of being naive simplicity. What an early woman mystic, Rābi'a told about her spiritual attitude may apply truly to all other mystics. She said :

"O God
If I worship Thee for fear of hell,
burn me in hell;
If I worship Thee in the hope of Paradise,
exclude me thence;
But if I worship Thee for Thine own sake,
Withhold not from me Thine everlasting beauty !"

From this point, however, the *Ṣūfī* metaphysics has advanced to a position which is common to all idealistic monism. The *Ṣūfī* says that God is the only reality, while the consciousness of the individual selfhood is absolutely unreal. The Allāh is *al-Wadūd,* the Love and the Loving; and hence it is the path of love alone which helps the individual self to raise itself above all that is illusory and unreal and be united with the Supreme. The stages of elevation to the said end are graded and graduated, in the final stage of which there is a oneness with 'the One true Light'. The intermediate stages mark the progressive

advance towards Divine Illumination and an immediate and absorbing Vision and Knowledge of things unseen and unknown. The stages also mark the progressive freedom from the veil of the senses and the aggressive egoism of the conscious individual life, occurring parallel to the greater and still greater realisation that man in his essential being is made in the likeness of the Divine Being. It is the development of the spiritual capacity in man which alone matters; and the fullest development of it, according to the *Ṣūfī* theosophy, is achieved in the state of a *walī*, *i.e.*, when man becomes, in the truest sense of the word, a protégé of God. Even a *walī* is graded according to the degree of his progress along the spiritual path. The highest stage of *walī*-hood is known as *qutb*, the most eminent; the band of *walīs*, after the attainment of the *qutb* stage, form a saintly body, acting as the administrators of the Supreme Being in the matters of the government of the world.

CHAPTER VII

SĀDHU SUNDAR SINGH

1

Birth, parentage, and early life — Sundar Singh's early manifestations; his dissatisfaction with Sikhism and indignation towards Christianity — Sundar's Vision and Revelation of the Christ — Sundar's Baptism — Sundar, a typical Christian Saint — The Sādhu's missionary tours in India and Tibet.

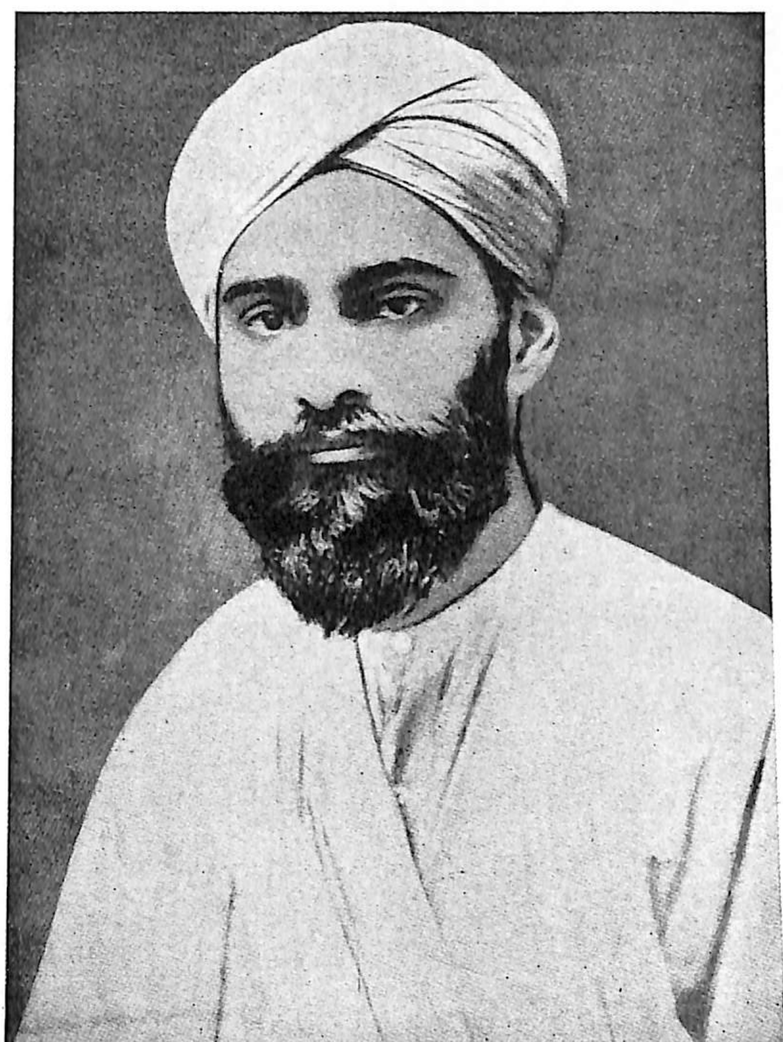
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Sādhu Sundar Singh, a typical Indian *Sādhu* — His spiritual ideal, "The *Living Christ*" — Nature of spiritual experience — The Sādhu on Spiritual Enlightenment — The Sādhu on spiritual *sādhanā* : (*a*) Bible Reading, (*b*) Meditation, and (*c*) Prayer — The Sādhu's faith in Prayer; his Miracles and service to humanity — His mystical gifts; Ecstasy — The Sādhu on the nature of Ecstasy — The Sādhu's conception of God — Unity of God and Nature — The Sādhu on Salvation — Divine Grace and self-effort — The Sādhu's idea of Creation — His Vision; the Cosmology and Cosmography (*a*) The Heaven upon Earth, (*b*) The Heaven as Paradise, and (*c*) The Highest Heaven.

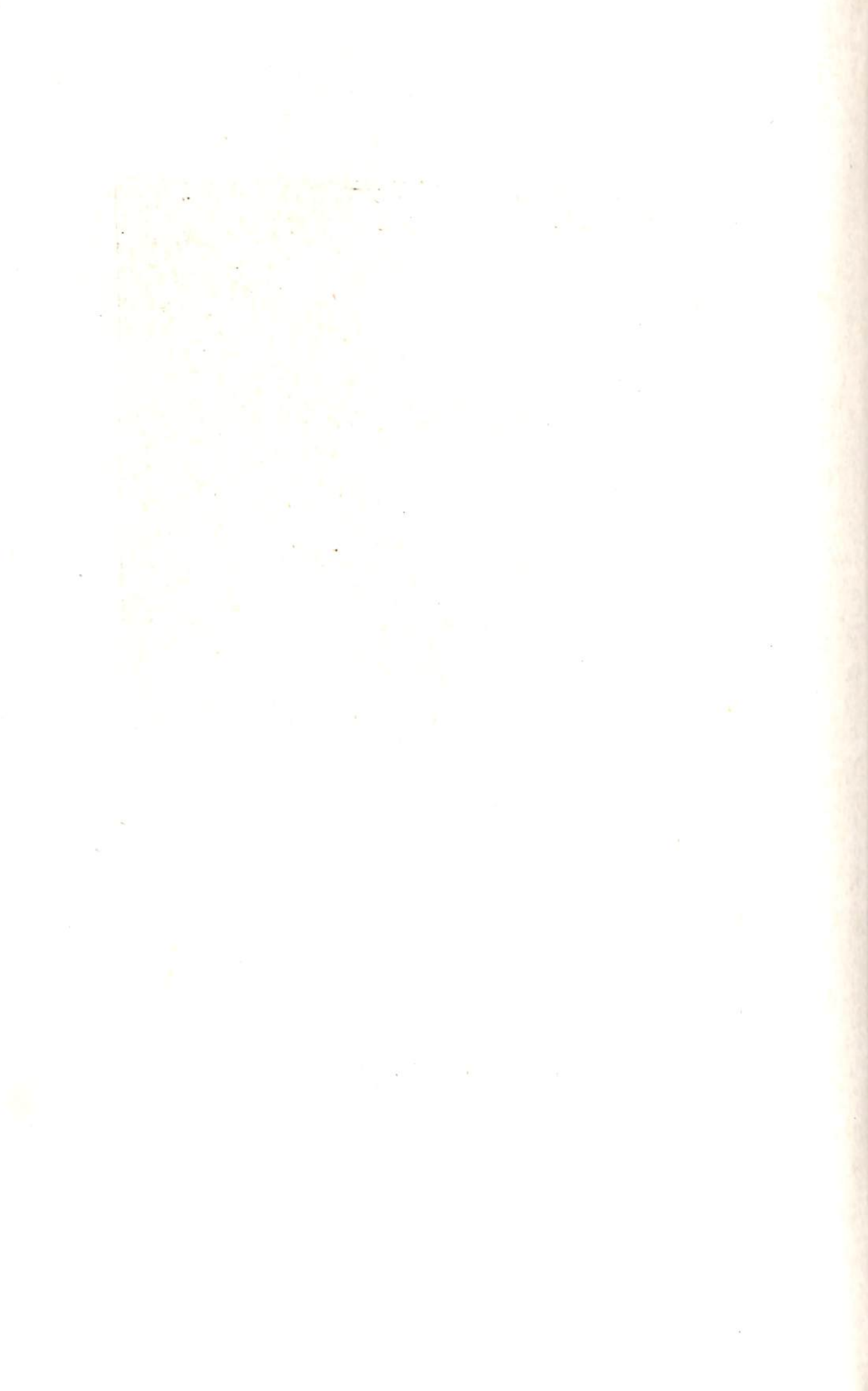
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Birth, Parentage, and Early Life :

Sādhu Sundar Singh was born in 1889 in the village of Rāmpur in the princely state of Pātiālā,



Sādhu Sundar Singh
(1889—?)



within the provincial boundaries of Punjāb. His father Sardar Sher Singh, a big landlord, belonged to an old, aristocratic, and affluent Sikh family. His mother was a cultured and religious woman. She used to take her son very often with her to the temple (*Gurudvārā*) and also to the hermits who led a life of renunciation in the neighbouring forest areas, and from whom she used to seek advice on spiritual matters. Sundar learnt the sacred writings of Sikhism and Hinduism from his mother. Even in his boyhood, his interest had been created in the holy books, including the *Vedas*, which he regularly read. The other books which he avidly perused were the *Grantha Sāheb* and the *Bhāgavata*. His mother instructed him and impressed upon him to aim at a dedicated life, instead of having a superficial worldly life, because in that way alone could he get peace of mind and soul. This instruction touched the boy's heart, and a strong desire to become an ascetic (*sannyāsin*) took root in his mind.

Sundar Singh's Early Manifestations; His Dissatisfaction with Sikhism and Indignation towards Christianity :

In 1903, when he was just fourteen, he lost his mother. During this period he was undergoing tremendous religious conflicts within himself. Deep sorrow, caused by the loss of his dear mother, filled his heart and aggravated the spiritual crisis through which he was passing at the time. He used to sit for long hours into the night, reading sacred books, the

Grantha Sāheb, the *Upaniṣads,* and the *Qurān.* He used to speculate upon the deep spiritual questions. He learnt the practice of *yoga* from a Hindu *sannyāsin.* For hours together he used to practise meditation, in order to get inward peace. But this was of no avail. Even his ancestral faith, Sikhism, could not help him regain his mental peace. He was, for reasons unaccounted for, very indignant towards Christianity and the Bible. At that time the Bible was being taught in the Mission school of his native place. His hatred for Christiantiy grew so strong that he became the leader of the group called the 'enemies of Christianity'. Several times he tore off pages of the Bible and other Christian writings. He even thought of inflicting physical violence on the Christian missionaries. On December 16, 1904, he burnt the Holy Bible. Being asked by his father why he had done such a mad thing, he replied that the religion of the West was bad and deserved to be destroyed.

Sundar's Vision and Revelation of the Christ:

Sundar's mind became very restless, and the inner agitation became so strong and unbearable to him that he could no longer restrain it. In sheer despair he resolved that unless a direct vision of God was vouchsafed to him, he would put an end to his life by some means or the other. With this idea, on December 18, 1904, he shut himself up in a room and meditated in a prayerful mood. He thought that unless something definite were made accessible to

him that night, he would commit suicide. It so happened that shortly afterwards, towards the end of the night, he saw a flash of a glorious light in his room. Thereupon he beheld a face, radiating streaks of light. In the midst of that circumambient light he saw a luminous face beaming with love, compassion, and affectionate solicitude. At first he thought that the face might be of the Buddha or of Kṛṣṇa. All of a sudden he could recognise the arrangement of the Crown of Thorns on the head, and he understood that it was none other than Jesus Christ Himself whom he had insulted. He believed he heard the following words spoken to him in Hindusthani :

> '*tu mujhe kyun sātātā hai ? dekh ! maiṁne tere liye apanī jān sālib par dī.*
>
> 'Why do you persecute me ? Remember, I laid down my life for you on the Cross.'[1]

Sundar was besides himself with joy, and the idea of suicide completely disappeared from his mind immediately after this vision. The next day he went to his father and conveyed his experience of the previous night and declared that he would become a Christian. Since then he remained a true Christian throughout his life. This in short is the history of Sundar's 'conversion' through the vision of Lord Jesus Himself. Narrating this experience Sundar says :

> "When Christ revealed Himself to me, then I saw I was a sinner and that He is my Saviour."[2]

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1. Gosp. S., p. 42.
2. Gosp. S., p. 42.

The Great Redeemer, Jesus, forgave Sundar for the latter's earlier misdeed of burning the Bible. Similarly his spiritual eyes were opened and he was asked to go forth and bear witness and confess that Christ was his Saviour.

Sundar's Baptism :

Sundar Singh's conversion created more than a flutter in the family dovecot. His elders were chagrined and condemned it; and, in deep shock, his father entreated him to give up Christianity and re-enter the fold of his family religion, Sikhism. But Sundar was firm in his decision, and owing to this he had to face bitter hatred and indignation from his friends and relatives. Sundar apprehended that his life was in danger; so he left home and took refuge in the Presbyterian Mission School at Ludhiānā. But being disgusted there with the life of the people, who were merely content with keeping up the external forms of Christianity, he left the school in great disappointment and came back to his family again. But this return home did not mean a return to the old faith. His relatives went to the extent of suggesting that Sundar could maintain his faith in secret, but Sundar said, "I am willing to suffer anything for my Lord, but I cannot deny Him."

The relatives now tried to throw attractive baits before him so that he would renounce Christianity. They took him to the Mahārājā of Pātiālā, a powerful

and influential Sikh native prince, who offered him a post of high honour. But Sundar declined this lucrative offer. Subsequently the parental odium fell upon him. Sundar was disinherited and turned out of home by his father. He then began to move from place to place like a wandering monk (*parivrājaka*), with a copy of the New Testament in his hand. On the first night of his wandering, he lived in the open air under a tree, shivering with cold and hunger. But relief and contentment came to him when he realised that his soul was suffused with a wonderful peace. Sundar said, "Verily that was my first night in Heaven."[3] But in this stage of his life, too, he suffered pain and misfortune at the hands of his fellow-men, who were hostile to him. They dogged his path, and poisoned him.

At God's command, upon which he entirely depended, he went to the Christians at Ruper and there he somehow managed to recover from the effects of poison. The help rendered to him by the Presbyterian Missionary, Rev. Uppal, and his wife was great indeed. After recovery, he returned to the Christian Boy's Boarding School at Ludhiānā where the missionaries, Dr. Wherry and Dr. Fife, received him cordially. Then he proceeded to Sabathu, Simla, where a medical mission was stationed. At any cost he wanted to be relieved from the constant pressure and threat of his relatives, who wanted him to give up Christianity and come back home. Then he went

3. Gosp. S., pp. 50-52.

to Simla. After a very searching examination and catechising, Mr. Redmann, a member of the Senior Missionary Society, was deeply impressed by Sundar's sincerity; he readily baptised Sundar on Sunday, September 3, 1905, in St. Thomas Church, according to the rites of the Anglican Church.

Sundar, a Typical Christian Saint :

Sundar chose the life of a wandering Christian monk (*sādhu*) in order to preach the Gospel of Jesus. The 'Sādhu', a boy of sixteen, started his peregrination of preaching, going barefoot, with a copy of the New Testament in his hand. He first preached in his native place. Then he moved on to different places, in the Punjab, Afghanistan, and Kashmir. After this exhausting mission he returnd to Kotgarh near Simla, in the Himālayas, where he met Rev. Stokes, a Franciscan Friar; from him he came to know about the great founder of the Franciscan order of monks, St. Francis of Assisi. In 1907, he worked in the leper asylum at Sabathu, and also in the Plague Hospital at Lahore, to bring peace and relief to the mortally afflicted. In 1909 he entered St. John's Divinity College at Lahore to study Theology. He received thorough and sound instruction in the Bible, and the *The Book of Common Prayer*, elementary Church History, Apologetics and Comparative Religion. He read Thomas à Kempis's famous spiritual classic, *The Imitation of Christ*, which influenced him greatly in his spiritual life. In 1909, he was promoted from the Beginner's

class to the Junior Catechist's class. In 1910, he left the Seminary and received licence to preach in the Anglican Churches at Lahore. By now he had come to be known as 'SĀDHU SUNDAR SINGH', a pure-hearted ascetic, and he dedicated his heart and soul to the preaching and propagation of the Lord's message. The Sādhu worked in close association with the Brotherhood of the Imitation of Christ, started by Mr. Stokes, but did not actually join it. He could not confine himself to the set bounds of the Anglican preaching activity alone, and went on preaching in other churches also.

The Sādhu's Missionary Tours in India and Tibet:

In 1913, while travelling through Northern India, the Sādhu withdrew himself into the forest area between Hārdvāra and Dehrā Dun, and kept fast for twelve days; giving himself up to meditation and prayer, he realised all the good that came to him as a result of fast and penance.

From 1912, the Sādhu's fame began to spread in all directions. He began to preach throughout India. In 1920, he went to the West and preached in several churches and colleges in England, Ireland, and Scotland. Later on, he also went to America, Australia, China, and Japan, and preached there the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

From the early days of his missionary life, the Sādhu had been cherishing a great desire to visit

Tibet and carry light to the people there, like Sir Francis Younghusband of much greater fame. His heart yearned to preach the holy message of the Lord Jesus to the benighted people of that "dark and closed land," as he used to call it. He knew neither the language nor the country and its people. His religious zeal was so great that he did not mind the tremendous risk involved in a journey to that forbidden land. In 1908, he first attempted to enter the 'closed' regions of Greater Tibet with the help of some missionaries and an evangelist, Tarnyed 'Ali by name. He covered some distance and preached the Gospel in the region called Bhod. As the Sādhu did not maintain any diary, it is not correctly known how often he went up to the hinterlands beyond the Himālayas or tried to cross over to the Tibetan mainland. In 1912, in company with Tarnyed 'Alī he reached the village of Shipkyi which is on the borders of India and Tibet, and preached to the people in his own language, which 'Alī interpreted. It is known that he went repeatedly to Tibet by way of Almora. During his journey in Tibet, Sādhu Sundar Singh met a missionary of the London Missionary Society twice, once at Dewārāhāt, near Almora, in 1913, and once at Dāngoli in 1917. In 1917, when he was returning from Tibet and Nepal, he stopped at Pithoragarh, close to the frontiers of Tibet and Nepal. Miss Turna of the London Missionary Society met him twice in 1915 and 1917 in Dāngoli (Almora). She also had received a letter from the Sādhu just after he had crossed over to the 'closed' region of Tibet. Sundar Singh was prevented many times from actually

crossing the frontier into Greater Tibet. Every year the Sādhu made attempts to enter Greater Tibet. There can be no doubt that he achieved his object several times. He used to be received by the people of Tibet, in different parts of the country, in different ways — sometimes acclaimed with joy, and sometimes persecuted. He used to say :

> "When I go to Tibet, I never expect to return. Each time I think it will be the last, but it is the will of God that I am preserved." [4]

He records that during his sojourn in Tibet, thrice he happened to meet an old seer in the regions on the neighbourhood of Mt. Kailāsa. He was known by the appellation of 'Maharṣi of Kailāsa', a great saint, who is said to have been born three hundred years before. The saint gave a lot of inspiration and knowledge to Sādhu Sundar Singh.

The biography of the Sādhu, as far as it is known to us, extends to the year 1920, when he was known to have been in Tibet. All of a sudden in this year, a dark curtain fell on the Sādhu's life, so that since 1920 the world received no news of the Sādhu's whereabouts. The very fact of his survival in bodily form is quite often disputed. Some of the admirers of the Sādhu are inclined to believe that the Sādhu is no longer in the land of the mortals and that it would be hoping against hope to expect his return to the country of his birth.

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4. Gosp. S., p. 71.

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Sādhu Sundar Singh, a Typical Indian Sādhu:

Sādhu Sundar Singh's conception of the mystic life had in it elements which were Christian, yet coloured by his Indian background. The Christian elements are certainly due to his adoption of the Christian faith and having worked in an atmosphere of Christian sanctity. But looked at closely and critically, it would seem that even his Christian predilections and the outer expressions of his convictions were essentially Indian in character. A study of the progress of his mystic consciousness, after his great inner conversion at the age of sixteen, makes it clear that his life, so far as its inner and outer aspects are concerned, was almost in every respect analogous to the lives of the followers of the *yoga* school, with which the history of Indian mysticism makes us familiar. We shall see later on that, except for the expression in language through which he preached the Gospel and gave out his experiences, there seems to be nothing in him that is inconsistent with the mode of life of an Indian saint pursuing the *yogic* path.

His Spiritual Ideal, "The Living Christ"

The nature of the Sādhu's spiritual ideal may be summed up in the expression *"Heaven upon Earth."* This expression was used by the Sādhu in his public addresses and private conversations to indicate the

deeply joyful peace felt in his soul, the experience of the *Living Christ*[5] at the moment of prayer to God, and his suffering for the needy and distressed in the world. Heiler has remarked that this expression was borrowed by the Sādhu from the Upaniṣadic literature

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5. *The Living Christ* : The concept of the *Living Christ* is the spiritual realisation of Christ's presence in the human soul. This concept is very rich in meaning, as it is associated with the total redemptive role of Christ, which was consumated by the event of his bodily resurrection after his crucifixion and burial. The earthly mission of Christ came to an end by his death on the Cross; it was an act of atonement for the sins of mankind (cf. Pauline *Letter to the Hebrews*, 9, 26-27). And this self-surrender was motivated by his infinite divine love to men. As St. John says : "Jesus knew that his hour had come and he must leave this world and go to the Father. He had always loved his own who were in the world, and now he was to show the full extent of his love" (cf. *The Gospel of St. John*, 13, 1). "There is no greater love than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends" (*John* 15, 13). So the love of God towards mankind, realised in sending Christ for human redemption (*John* 3, 16.) reached its climax on the Cross. But he wanted to live again for mankind. So by his divine power he conquered death by his resurrection. This gave hope and meaning to all human miseries and suffering, because Christ's resurrection was the beginning of his new life in his faithful. This he assured his disciples when he left the world : "I am with you always, to the end of time" (*The Gospel of St. Mathew*, 28, 20). His invisible presence is spiritually realised by one who loves him and abides by his law of loving all men as He loved us (*John* 14, 19-21). His eternal presence in this world is also understood in terms of grace, which his resurrection stored for all men. (cf. *John* 1, 16-17). Sādhu Sundar Singh's experience of the *Living Christ* is basically founded on this concept.

and not from the Christian sources; and there is no doubt that his entire life since his conversion was lived in this Heaven, to which he himself testified in one of his statements made in Switzerland.[6] In his opinion, suffering hardships for the sake of Christ constitutes the highest form of Eternal Bliss on this earth. The ineffability of the experience of joy and peace is proportional to the reality of the inward prayer in which the souls are in communion with God and the reality of His Presence felt. This idea is found to have been repeatedly referred to in the Sādhu's writings and conversations.

Nature of Spiritual Experience :

Spiritual experience, in the view of the Sādhu, has two aspects. It consists of, first, an intensely articulate feeling of liberation and joy; and second, the deep realisation that it is supported at every point by the Divine Reality which is beyond nature. There is no room for vague emotions in true spiritual experience, in every form of which there is a need for clear and definite perception. The will and the emotion grasp the experience of the soul, but its reality has to be confirmed by concrete perception. There is a happy combination of the triple elements of will, emotion, and perception in the mystic experience. The

6. "This is my testimony: for the past sixteen years I have lived in Heaven". Gosp. S., p. 119.

Sādhu was a man of real mystic experience and had no respect for theological conceptualism. In his case, the only criterion of one's devotion and spirituality was one's personal experience, and not the ability of philosophical discussions, however logical and subtle. So we find him saying that what a man should really care for in the beginning of his spiritual career is faith and experience, and not understanding, which will follow later. There can be no true understanding except on the basis of one's own experience.

Like all mystics, the Sādhu had no faith in dogma or in the overweening authority of theological speculation. The truth, according to him, is to be felt and perceived in the heart and not analysed and dissected with the intellect, though the intellect has also its own contribution to make in the formation of spiritual experience. It is only when there is a total surrender to God that His Power and Will are revealed to us. The mystic experience gained in the heart is the most important element in the life of faith. The only authority in the sphere of spiritual consciousness, therefore, is that of souls that are in personal touch with God. Salvation, the Sādhu affirms, is not something to be coldly discussed, but is to be experienced within.

The Sādhu on Spiritual Enlightenment :

In the opinion of the Sādhu, the secret of Peace and Joy lies in one's experience of spiritual truths.

Philosophy as such is incapable of producing spiritual Illumination or Divine Knowledge, which is beyond the power of intellect to grasp. Simplicity of faith, and purity of inner life, are more valuable than indulging in the riddles of metaphysical arguments. In any perfect experience, all of the three psychical elements of personality, considered together, have their proper place; but considered separately, in the context of the life of faith, feeling is given a higher place than the intellect.

The Sādhu on Spiritual Sādhanā : (*a*) *Bible Reading,* (*b*) *Meditation, and* (*c*) *Prayer* :

In the scheme of the Sādhu's spiritual discipline, prayer occupies the most important place. It is the means by which communion with Eternal Reality is effected. But as a preliminary step to prayer, he assigns great importance to the study of the Bible and to meditation. His great regard for the Bible is unquestionable. To him it is the Word of God, the meaning of which can be grasped only by those who live in the Spirit. His own method was, therefore, to spend several hours every morning in studying the Bible, in meditation, and in prayer. He valued reflective meditation. He used to take a passage of the Scripture, and then to meditate upon its meaning and continue praying. It goes without saying that this method is truly the ancient Indian method recommended by the Vedic seers on the one hand and by the Buddhist sages on the other. For there is no doubt (as Heiler has

pointed out) that his study of the Bible, meditation, and prayer corresponded literally to, and seem to have been inspired by, the practices of *śravaṇa, manana*, and *nididhyāsana* of the Brāhminical and the Buddhistic paths of self-culture.

The Sādhu found that concentrated attention upon a particular religious truth was most helpful and efficacious. The prayer to which he gave preference was more or less of the nature of contemplation in the form of silent communion with God. Being a true devotee with strong emotional susceptibilities, he did not like the contemplation of the formless and undefinable Being, to which the *jñānins* and the *yogins*, the followers of the two most popular Hindu esoteric paths of Self-realisation, give a very high place. Since he realised an immediate and living communion with the personal God through the establishment of a deeply personal relationship, he could not use the expression 'Thou' in his prayer. The importance which he placed on prayer can be seen from the fact that, according to him, prayer was more helpful than meditation, because meditation was not of much importance in the illumination of the spirit, which enabled a man to grasp and enter deeply into the spiritual truths. Conscience, which is the most sensitive part of the soul, he further said, was illuminated by real prayer. The Sādhu also warned that what was popularly known as prayer was only self-centred, an egoistic and unabashed petition and crying for doles and gifts. Prayer was not this, nor was it identical with introversion, which also should be characterised as being self-centred. If one

was childish, the other was barren. The two states represented nothing else but the two different levels of personality on the lower side. Then we find him defining true prayer according to his realisation. He says that true prayer is another name for self-surrender and it is midway between the two states pointed out above. Sundar Singh's prayer, which was inspired by the deepest faith in the *Living Christ*, breathes the blessedness of the Divine Presence; it is comparable to that of the Roman Catholic saints, and was spiritually the best of its kind. It was the opening of his heart to God, speaking to Him and expressing the great peace and freedom felt by living in constant communion with Him. Even spiritual blessings were not the objective of his prayer; and that is how the true devotee's prayer ought to be.

The Sādhu was, however, liberal and broad-minded enough to recognise that although true prayer did not mean seeking for anything as a gift or reward from God, in its earlier stages (when the devotee's faith is yet to mature and be firm) a yearning for earthly or heavenly blessings was certainly permissible. In true prayer, the only desire which remained in the soul was the desire for God Himself. Sādhu Sundar Singh recognised that even foolish desires received God's indulgence if the soul was strictly and exclusively directed towards God, because as a true Christian he believed that the presence of God in the devotee's heart would gradually change the heart and eliminate all desires emanating from it, with the result that there

would finally be a total surrender to the Will of God. We are reminded, in this connection, of the famous statement of the *Bhāgavata* wherein there is the injunction that the heart must be fixed upon God by all means, be they proper or improper : *yena kena prakāreṇa manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet.* The Sādhu himself expressed his opinion on this point thus :

> "The heat and the sun's rays, falling upon salt water, cause evaporation, which gradually becomes condensed into clouds which again descend in the form of sweet fresh water. The salt and all the other things, are left behind. In the same way the thoughts and desires of the praying soul rise to heaven like clouds, then the Sun of Righteousness cleanses them from the taint of sin by His purifying rays. The prayer then becomes a great cloud which falls in showers of blessing, life and strength upon the earth below."[7]

In prayer all the avenues of the soul are opened to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God who gently breathes, with the result that the praying soul is transformed by God into His own life and love. The Sādhu observes that prayer reveals the Supreme Reality as Redeeming Love. God is resplendently seated in the praying soul as a personal Saviour. True prayer, likewise, is performed in solitude when the voice of the *Living Christ* becomes audible.

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7. Gosp. S., p. 102.

The Sādhu's Faith in Prayer; His Miracles and Service to Humanity :

We have already noted Sundar Singh's faith in the efficacy of prayer. This efficacy is due to the fact that prayer makes communion with Eternal Reality possible. His piety, love of Christ, sacrificing spirit and apostolic zeal — all these were the outer results of prayer. The instances of supranormal power, which people saw in the life of the Sādhu, were also derived from the same source. Christ said to him personally as he reported, that whatever is impossible for a human being under ordinary circumstances becomes possible through prayer. This is what Sādhu Sundar Singh says and he adds that it is for this reason that prayer is believed to be so potential as to work miracles. More things are wrought by prayer than the world thinks of — this is not a mere poetic fancy.

According to Sundar Singh, there is in reality no such thing as a miracle, because nothing can happen in nature against its own laws. What is popularly known as a miracle is really an occurence which, howsoever conflicting with the usually known laws of nature, is yet in conformity with its higher laws.[8] The experience of such mircales in the life

8. " Miracles are not in opposition to natural law. There are higher laws in Nature of which we usually know nothing. Miracles are related to these higher laws. Through prayer we gradually learn to understand them " — Sādhu Sundar Singh.

of a devotee (*bhakta*) has the effect of strengthening his faith; it has a lasting effect. The greatest miracle which is wrought by prayer in the soul is the permanent establishment of Joy and Peace in the soul. Sundar Singh says that constant prayer in solitude is a better means of helping others than preaching in the streets, for, in the former case, a secret influence emanates from the praying soul and pervades the entire atmosphere with an aura of spirituality.

The silent communion with God, which formed Sādhu Sundar Singh's prayer and from which he drew all his spiritual sustenance, was remarkable in the true mystic tradition. Religion without prayer is inconceivable. If religion is understood as a spiritual discipline emanating from the individual's experience of God dwelling in him, then prayer is the most direct and most sincere expression of this religion in the individual. That is why Martin Luther said: "Prayer and nothing but prayer!," and St. Thomas Aquinas affirmed that "prayer is the peculiar practical proof of religion." The forms and faiths, creeds and rituals are but the outer and indirect expressions of the religious spirit; prayer, on the other hand, is the most sincere and most undiluted means by which man seeks and finds Him. Mysticism in this context is a unique mode of seeking God, though it is born of religion and is inspired by it. A mystic may be within a particular religious fold and may be adhering to its rituals and ceremonies, but in the core of his heart the path he pursues is that of the Cosmic Being. On the negative side it is an attempt at a complete self-abnegation and a complete self-surrender to God's

Will, and on the positive side it is the ascent to that state of heavenly bliss which results from a harmony with the Infinite and the Eternal. Essentially, mysticism is beyond the confines of the personality and its cultural setting. But it may have these forms in particular cases, though its essential character will remain the same. Prayer in mystic experiences, however, has a greater value. It is the expression of a deep hunger in the dedicated soul for redemption, for freedom from the confusing outer world of things and for escape from his own selfish ego. Prayer to a mystic is the rod to drive out all disquietude, all imagination, and all concern about worldly objects. It has been well said that it is through prayer alone that man can sink away from himself and from all things. Thus prayer to a mystic is the supreme form of self-purification, the most important step towards reaching the goal of communion with God, who illuminates the heart and the spirit of all the created beings. The communion itself is a state which is productive of the greatest purity, tenderness, sweetness, and ecstasy. It is also a state reached through the serene and sublime contemplation of God through prayer, and hence free from all narrowness and obscurity.

In the Sādhu's life, prayer was given the highest place simply because he could intuitively grasp its profound value as stated above. His was a silent prayer unnoticed by others. It was thus a form of the quietest variety of prayer of which there have been very well-known advocates in the past. A quiet prayer to a mystic like Sādhu Sundar Singh must have

been an expression of pure love which is free from all desires of reward. It must also have been inspired by a deep feeling that prayer to God must have the same attributes as of God Himself—peace and tranquillity. Finally, the silent prayer must have been accompanied by intense spiritual activity within, of the ascent of the spirit towards the Supreme. From all this it will not be erroneous to conclude that the Sādhu in his own way pursued his own form of silent prayer with the aim of God-realisation, which essentially was the same as pursued by the more illustrious sages and mystics of the past—the Prophets of the Old Testament, the Neoplatonists like Plotinus, the early Christian Fathers like St. Augustine, and the *yogins* and *jñānins* of medieval India. As an exponent of inner prayer, Sādhu Sundar Singh's name should therefore be written in golden letters, and more deeply so because it was so sincerely and so unostentatiously pursued, and was carried on along with his humanitarian activities of the service of man, and in that way, of God also.

His Mystical Gifts; Ecstasy :

The Sādhu possessed numerous spiritual graces and had mystical gifts of a very high order. He was a great ecstatic. He used to describe to his admirers and acquaintances that he had not taken recourse to the *yogic* practices to realise the ecstatic condition. So it can be presumed that he had some idea of the *yogic* path of *sādhanā*. His method on the other hand was to have prolonged meditation and

from meditation to pass into mental prayer, from which he glided into ecstasy — a state in which the function of the external senses was stopped and even the mind ceased to work. It is related of him that a friend came to him once when he was in this condition and that the friend noticed him smiling with his eyes wide open. However, when the friend addressed the Sādhu the latter did not hear him. On another occasion, he fell into the ecstatic state while under a tree with a hornets' hive nearby, and although he was stung extensively on his body by the hornets, he did not feel anything at all. In ecstacies, as we know from the records of the well-known mystics of the world, there remains no sense of time, either past or future. Only the present is felt as a self-luminous Eternal Now. The Sādhu has expressed himself very definitely on the obliteration of a sense of time and space in his own trans-psychic states. The statement of Bhartṛhari that the past and the future reveal themselves as one continuous Present, self-luminous and immediate, with the Light dawning on the soul dispelling all darkness and removing all the sources of its distraction, is found illustrated in the ecstatic experience of the Sādhu. Bhartṛhari says :

āvirbhūtaprakāśānāmanupadrūtacetasām .
atītānāgataṁ jñānaṁ pratyakṣānna viśiṣyate . .[9]

That is :

To them to whom the Celestial Flame has revealed itself in its supernal luminosity and to

9. *Vākyapadīya*, I. 37.

them whose mind enjoys an unruffled calm, the knowledge of the remote past and the unborn future is as clear and authentic as their knowledge of the perceptible and cognisable world lying actually before them.

Ecstasy which is a wakeful and alert condition is a state of superconsciousness, and is sharply distinguished from trance, which is a semiconscious condition. This shows that in ecstasy consciousness is not mitigated but highly intensified.

In ecstasy, the invisible world becomes an object of immediate perception and some of the greatest mysteries which baffle intellectual solution are revealed to the soul; in a like manner, the most intricate problems of life and thought are solved in a moment. The Sādhu's ecstasies were of this kind. When he was in this state, he held communion with Christ and with the angels and saints in his inmost heart and got inspirations from the Holy Spirit. His soul was filled with a sense of profound peace and ineffable joy. He felt refreshed when he came back to the normal consciousness and experienced a sense of detachment from earthly things.

The Sādhu on the Nature of Ecstasy:

The Sādhu never made a special effort to produce ecstasy within himself. It came upon him as a surprise and even in unexpected moments. On some occasions it so happened that he had to restrain him-

self from falling an easy victim to the incoming tide of an ecstatic mood. It may be of some interest to note that he was not privileged to have the ecstatic state for the long period of eight years immediately after his conversion, though thereafter it occurred to him very frequently, generally eight to ten times a month. In having such frequent ecstatic moments Sundar Singh was a typical Indian mystic. The frequency of ecstasy in his life was not dependent upon the degree of his personal spiritual qualifications. It was conditioned by the nature of his own spiritual elevation. He explains the value of ecstasy in his personal life in the following words :

> "The gift of ecstasy which God has given me is more precious than any earthly home could ever be. In it I find a joy so wonderful that it transcends all others."[10]

Prayer, in the opinion of the Sādhu, is a universal heritage and is within everybody's reach and ability. Ecstasy, however, is exceptional. Unless God shows a special grace, no mortal could have it. Yet none need lose heart in its absence. The Sādhu says :

> "If it is God's will that one should go further, God Himself will show the way, if this is not granted him, let him remain contentedly upon the simple level of ordinary prayer."[11]

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10. Gosp. S., p. 112.
11. Gosp. S., p. 112.

The Sādhu's Conception of God :

Sundar Singh's conception of God is quite in keeping with his character as an ecstatic. For to him the essence of Divinity is an eternal mystery beyond the apprehension and expression of man. The consciousness of the ineffable character of God is heightened on return to normal life from the world of ecstasy. God is an infinite ocean of love from which man is drawn away through sin. Yet, as a true believer in the *Living Christ*, Sādhu Sundar Singh thinks that God draws man to himself with all the currents of his spiritual life. He alone, one must be certain, is the goal of all the aspirations and longings of man. God loves man and longs to be loved by him. As a matter of fact the yearning of God and that of the human soul are reciprocal. The Sādhu says in this connection :

> "God Himself is pleased when we pray. He rejoices in our worship. Yes, God and the soul long for each other. God needs our prayer, just as a mother does not feel well if her baby does not lie in her bosom and suck. God becomes richer because He gives us what we need, just as we become richer by giving ourselves and all we have to others."

As regards the dual elements in God's nature like wrath and love, the Sādhu does not recognise them; for him, God is nothing but pure Love, and never is He a judge and discriminator, nor ever revengeful. The Sādhu's idea of God is thus fundamentally

different from the ideas of the Hebrew Prophets, of Jesus himself, and of St. Paul and others, all of whom regard the Divine Person both as Judge as well as the Saviour.[12] As far as the Sādhu is concerned, he does not believe that God judges and condemns the sinner. He says :

> "Justice is the retributive principle inherent in the action itself which inevitably results in punishment in the life of him who has allowed it to dominate him."

A sinful man is drawn into hell by his own sin and not by God. God does not hate the sinners, but the latter love sin and run counter to God; and finally sinfulness becomes so ingrained in them that even the joys of heavenly life have not only no attraction to them but (and what a perversity) appears to be torturing.

The Sādhu's view of God and His attitude to sinner is thus different from the orthodox Christian

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12. Scholars learned in Christian theology are of the opinion that in the Old Testament the idea of both wrath and mercy are found to be associated with Divine Nature. Cf. *Psalms*, 89. 14. " Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy Throne; mercy and Truth shall go before my Face ". In the New Testament, however, wrath is less prominent than mercy, but it is present all the same, for even the *Gospel of St. John*, so overflowing with the concept of an all-merciful and loving God, is not entirely free from it (cf. John. III. 36). In the first *Epistle of John*, however, the idea of wrath has altogether disappeared and God is shown to be nothing but Love.

notion. The judgment of God, whose love is an eternal principle and is active everywhere, even in hell, is the creation of inner agony and remorse of a sinful man who sees himself in the light of God's presence, the light which convinces him of his sinful condition and his damnation for having transgressed God's will and decree.

To all others, Sādhu Sundar's simple faith expresses itself in memorable words. He says that God in His essential nature is always invisible. No man, not even the angels or glorified beings of Heaven, can see Him as He really is. But though invisible, God reveals Himself through the world, both visible and invisible. Sundar Singh in his ecstasy experienced the mysterious relation between the Supreme God who is eternally invisible and the incarnate God or Christ who is the express Image of the invisible God. The Sādhu is emphatic on the point that God in His hidden Essence is always beyond comprehension and can be seen only in His Son Christ. Christ is His visible incarnation on earth. God's infinite love and mercy and all His infinite divine qualities express themselves most clearly in His Son, whom, Sundar Singh says, he saw with his physical eyes in his vision at the time of his conversion. He saw the same with his spiritual eyes whenever in ecstasy. He is sure that it is not possible to experience Him, to know Him, to see Him and to enjoy His love except through Christ. The Infinite God took upon Himself a human form because man, a finite creature, is unable to behold Him in His Supreme Glory and Power. Sundar Singh says :

"We human creatures cannot see Him because He is infinite. If we could become infinite, we could see Him. Here and now we are incapable of seeing Him, our Creator, our Father, the Giver of life. That is why He became flesh; He took a human, limited form in order that men might thus be able to behold Him."

Unity of God and Nature:

The Sādhu was always keenly alive to the essential unity of God and Nature. Here his attitude differs from that of the other Christian mystics and also from those of the Hindu mystics of the *Tāntrika* type, though the latter find God in Nature. To Sundar Singh both God and Nature are identical; the entire world, visible and invisible, reflects in him the different aspects of the infinite nature of God. He believes in God revealing Himself in the natural order including the plants and the animals. But the best revelation of God is in the depths of the human soul. The Sādhu says in his gospels that man is a mirror in which the universe is reflected. He is a microcosm in its true sense. Man is really nature's inarticulate language. In his estimation, therefore, the entire creation reflecting the *Eternal God* is surely leading to Him.

The Sādhu on Salvation:

The Sādhu holds that salvation implies, at once, forgiveness and justification in God's eyes. Its bless-

ings are freedom from sin and the enjoyment of peace that passes comprehension. These cannot be realised by a man through his own unaided efforts. Human efforts may be sincere and strenuous, but all efforts will be unavailing unless charged with Divine Grace. This Grace which is really an unmerited gift from God is showered by Christ as a result of the devotee's prayer. The salvation which thus comes to a man as gracious gift is the forgiveness alone with a radical destruction of sin. What is achieved finally in this process is the transformation and renewal of the entire being; it is a new nativity in a new dawn of enlightenment. The possibility of this transformation depends on the process and degree of sanctification or influx of fresh spiritual vitality into the soul from its intimate union with Christ. Of the two kinds of Grace, viz., of justification and sanctification, Sundar Singh regards them as identical. In his view these constitute an infused grace which works a qualitative change in the soul and paves the path of salvation.

Divine Grace and Self-effort

Sādhu Sundar Singh's deep faith had a penetrating inroad into the practical affairs of life and into the humanitarian works which he undertook. We find him saying that man cannot do any really good work, that is, a work of love and righteousness, unless his heart is thoroughly cleansed and his personality is renewed. The sinful heart cannot produce any good

action. It becomes good only through God's redeeming activity, when man enters into communion with the *Living Christ* through faith. Good deeds thus initiated by God and carried on sincerely are strengthened with additional help from God. Such deeds succeed and produce peace and joy and bring about salvation. A man may be said to be converted or become a new man, capable of leading a new holy life of faith and love, only when his faith in God is living and he is engrafted into Christ. The order of sequence between faith and good work may thus be shown :

(1) Faith — the redeeming Grace of God.

(2) Change of heart, *i.e.*, turning from evil ways to the ways of God.

(3) Ethical activities or good deeds inspired by love and compassion and charged with faith.

Divine Grace ends in effecting a man's inward transformation and in making him truly creative.

Sundar's saintliness is revealed in his inspiring Christian ideal that, first, a man should become good and with unshakable faith pray to Him, which alone can bring about the function of God's Grace in giving his inner being a spiritual rebirth. Then only will he be able to discharge his divinely ordained duties. Spontaneously he will be led to good works, which he will be able to do without any doubt or

fear. The common moralists of the world declare that a man must do good work first, in order that he may become good. The holy and pious Christian idea in this regard is that the moral and spiritual cleansing of the soul, and the dawning of a new and fresh inner life, both dependent entirely upon God's Grace, make a man good. This is not merely a slow process of an exclusively human act, but a steady co-operation of man with God's inflow of grace. When goodness has been established in man's nature, he becomes capable of initiating and completing really good works for the service of the world. Sādhu Sundar Singh's ideas are the same as shown above, with the saving grace that his emphasis and insistence is always on simplicity, innocence, purity, and the discarding of all ostentation. His is the typical pursuit of the good by a devout and pure-hearted quietist, along the path of faith, self-surrender, and prayer.

From our side, we cannot ignore how Sundar Singh's views and path have basic similarities with other faiths, especially with those that our land gave birth to and nurtured. Lest there should be any cavilling on this regard, we would like to say that the so-called Christian path is not an exclusive monopoly of Christianity, for it is, as far as its essential features are concerned, found in common with all the religions of the world. Hinduism, for instance, has a similar view as expressed in its doctrine of *dīkṣā* and second birth, about which we had occasions to give detailed discussions in our chapters on Vijayakṛṣṇa and Santadāsa.

The Sādhu's Idea of Creation :

In Sundar Singh's gospels we find references to his ideas about the nature of cosmic evolution. Interesting as it is by itself, it invites attempts at its critical examination and comparative analysis. The Sādhu's theory of creation may be summed up briefly. Like the *Upaniṣad* which says that all things came out of Bliss Eternal, persist in It, and go back into It, the Sādhu holds that finite creation came into existence out of God's Infinite Love. The aim of creation is "to give man real joy through His creative presence." The creation reflects within itself the glory of the Divine Being. But at the same time it goes without saying that the finite world is an infinitesimal portion of the boundless eternity over which God rules. Hence much exists which we, with our physical eyes, cannot see.

His Vision; The Cosmology and Cosmography : (*a*) *The Heaven upon Earh,* (*b*) *The Heaven as Paradise, and* (*c*) *The Highest Heaven.*

Sādhu Sundar Singh used to have visions of the unseen world during ecstasy. Although it is not possible, with the resources accessible to us, to construct his cosmological scheme in detail, we have sufficient material in his writings and addresses from which we can form an idea of his conception of heaven and hell. The word 'heaven', as used by the Sādhu

in different contexts, has two different senses, viz., the state of the soul in peace and happiness, and also a particular plane of existence inhabitated by beings who have achieved absolute spiritual perfection. This use of the word 'heaven' is analogous to the use of the word '*Brahman*', which means in Indian philosophical literature not only the Absolute but also a particular plane of consciousness or life called *Brahmaloka*.

Sundar Singh distinguishes three heavens. They are as follows :

(1) *Heaven upon earth,* or in other words the presence of the *Living Christ* showering peace and happiness upon the praying soul.

(2) *Heaven as Paradise,* or in other words, a region in the elevated celestial kingdom, into which man enters in his spiritual being after his death and where he has to stay for a certain period; it may be brief or it may be long — during which his spiritual training under the angels is done until he is fit for the visions of Christ. It is a place for purification and purgation, but the cleansing is not a painful process.[13]

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13. The Sādhu's conception of purgatory seems to differ materially from that of most of the Christian saints. The spiritual flames cleansing the souls of men from the impurities of sin, of which we read in the descriptions of Western mystics, are altogether absent in the intermediate state to which the Sādhu refers. Regarding the views of Western mystics one may refer to the writings bearing on the Purgative Way (cf. Dante,

The souls enjoy, in this region, the presence of Christ whom they cannot yet see with their spiritual eyes. Instead, this blissful presence is felt in waves of light that flood the region. The strains of heavenly music are heard from afar, adding to the joy of experience in this intermediate state. Under the angelic supervision the souls of the departed are so trained as to have pure desires, to contemplate the Face of Christ, and to enjoy the company of the elect souls and the saints.

(3) *Highest Heaven*, or the highest empyrean region, in which a human being attains a close fellowship with God. To such a state he can directly have the privilege of ascent after death, provided he deserves to have the Grace needed therefor. Saints and great souls, like St. Francis of Assisi and Thomas à Kempis were such privileged souls, whose deep and lifelong spirituality made this miracle possible. But in special cases

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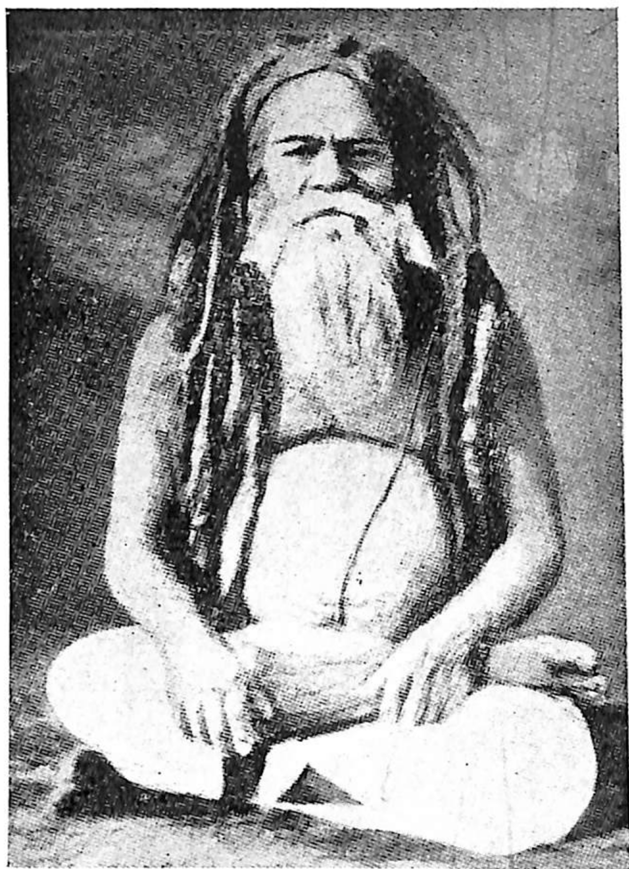
St. Catherine of Genoa, St. John of the Cross, and others). St. Catherine observes : "the souls are covered by a rust, *i.e.*, by sin which is gradually consumed by the fire of Purgatory. The more it is consumed, the more they respond to God, their true sun. Their happiness increases as the rust falls off and lays them open to the divine rays." (*Treatise on Purgatory* by St. Catherine of Genoa, Chapters II — III). Sundar Singh describes this intermediate state as "The temporary dwelling place of spirits after they leave the body at death," a state between the glory and light of the highest heaven and the dimness and darkness of the lowest hells. (*Visions of the Spiritual World*, p. 19).

some souls, though physically earth-bound, are able to visit this state in spirit, from time to time, through special Grace. All through such moments they are capable of having communion with Christ, angels, and saints. Sundar Singh himself, as he sincerely describes in his gospel and other writings, used to have visions of the third Heaven often in his life. The gleaming throne of Christ the Saviour, in the centre of this Heaven, was what he saw in his vision. He gives a vivid description of the physical appearance of the Saviour and observes that he saw His throne surrounded by innumerable celestial beings clothed in light. All their faces appeared to be similar, on account of the reflection of the face of Christ on each of them. Between Christ seated on the throne and these beings, luminous waves of the Holy Spirit flowed back and forth producing peace and happiness everywhere. These celestial and angelic beings beheld the Face of the Saviour all around them. Among the other wonderful things which he saw in the highest Heaven, Sundar Singh notes some very interesting ones, including wonderful streams, mountains, flowers, and trees — all transparent, allowing the spiritual eye to penetrate infinite distances; glorious music resounding in the heavenly walls; a spiritual language used by the celestial beings in their conversation; a ringing prayer in which the spirit, the rivers, the mountains, etc., were all fused in a wonderful harmony with abstract states like absence of fatigue, pain, sorrow, etc., on one side and joy,

peace, and love on the other, all tuned to eternity and fused with an indescribable dynamism of unceasing movement towards Divine Perfection. It should be remembered, if we follow Sādhu Sundar Singh's words, that even in the highest Heaven the Supreme God or God the Father is invisible.

The Sādhu's views on hell, however, suffer from inconsistency. In his earlier life he believed in the existence of hell and everlasting punishment. To him it was then a painful purgatory in which the sinner through the severe ordeals was purged of his sins. But later on he came to modify his views. In most of his later gospels, as it transpires, he expresses nothing but a lack of faith in everlasting punishment. His idea is that even sinners after necessary purging will enter heaven, which must come sooner or later. Only a very small number of utterly devilish souls, including the devils, will be shut out forever from the light of Heaven.

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Santadāsa Bābājī
(1859 — 1935)

CHAPTER VIII

SANTADĀSA BĀBĀJĪ

1

Birth, parentage, and early life — Tārākishore's *upanayana*, early education, and marriage — Change in his outlook and entrance to Brāhmo Samāja — His higher education; Tārākishore as a college professor — His entrance into *Yogin* sect; his *Yogic* practices and *Ṣaṭ-cakra-bheda* — His relation with Brāhmo Samāja and re-acceptance of sacred thread — Tārākishore as a lawyer; his return to Orthodoxfold and interest in Bengal Vaiṣṇavism — His return to Calcutta and deeper *Yoga-sādhanā*; his vision — His pilgrimage and initiation under Rāmadāsa Kāṭhiyā Bābā — His practice as a lawyer and his literary works — His post-initiation activities — Tārākishore's *sādhanā* and *siddhi* — His adoption of *sannyāsa*; Tārākishore known as BĀBĀJĪ SANTADĀSA; his passing away.

2

Santadāsa's *sādhanā* at Vṛndāvana — Santadāsa's Diary — Santadāsa's close association with *Pātañjala-Yoga* system — Santadāsa on virtue, vice, and other ethical problems — Santadāsa on Meditation and its fourfold objective, and *Kriyā-yoga* — His further elaboration on the concept of Meditation — Santadāsa's further meditation on *Brahman* — Santadāsa's threefold *sādhanā*; *Tridaṇḍa* — Santadāsa's further *sādhanā* — Santadāsa's review of his own spiritual progress — Santadāsa on *Brahman* and *Brahman*-realisation — Santadāsa's further *sādhanā* — His views on *doṣa* and *guṇa* — Santadāsa's new scheme of Meditation; three Meditations.

3

Santadāsa on *Brahman*, *Jīva*, and *Māyā* — Santadāsa on four aspects of *Brahman* — Santadāsa on the method of approach to Mystic Realisation — Santadāsa on *Guru*, *Dīkṣā*, and the process of *Sādhanā*.

Birth, Parentage, and Early Life :

Tārākishore Cowdhurī, who was in later life known as Santadāsa Bābājī, or simply as Bābājī Mahārāj, was born in 1859 in the village Bamai in the district of Sylhet in Assam, the north-eastern province of India. His father Harakishore Cowdhurī belonged to a well-to-do Vaiṣṇava Brahmin family. His mother was Girijā Sundarī Devī.

His Upanayana, Early Education, and Marriage :

Though Tārākishore was very fidgety and restless in his childhood he was very intelligent and meritorious. His education commenced at the age of six when along with Bengali, his mother-tongue, he began to study Saṁskrit and read the great epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, in Bengali under the guidance of his loving grandmother and uncle. Everybody who watched him at this age was struck

by his prodigious memory. He entered the village school at the age of seven. At the age of nine when he lost his mother, he was not much affected; the other elders of the family by their affection never allowed him to feel the loss of his mother. His sacred thread ceremony (*upanayana*) was celebrated in his village home, whereafter he was initiated into the Brāhminic order. Young though he was at that time, his deeper instincts led him to give great importance to the performance of his daily morning and evening prayer (*sandhyā*) which he performed with great reverence and assiduity. His further education was continued in the Mission School and Government High School at Sylhet. In 1874, at the age of fourteen, he passed the Entrance Examination of Calcutta University with great credit. He was married in the same year to Annadā Devī, daughter of Haracandra Bhaṭṭācārya. For his higher studies, he was sent to Calcutta, where he joined the Presidency College, a leading institution affiliated to Calcutta University.

Change in His Outlook and Entrance to Brāhmo Samāja:

During this time his growing contact with men of light and learning like Surendra Nath Banerjea, a great political leader, and Pandit Śivanāth Śāstrī, a great scholar and preacher of Brāhmoism, in the city of Calcutta, began to stir and impress his mind

in a very deep manner; his attitude thus changed towards one of lack of faith in the conservative ways of life of his forefathers. One of the striking characteristics in him was that he was very strong-willed, with a wonderful courage of conviction. Nobody could make him deviate from the path which his conscience and intellect had taught him to be correct. However, this ominous mental change was noticed by his orthodox father, who did not approve of it, and who, therefore, stopped remitting money to him for his studies in Calcutta. Tārākishore left the Presidency College and joined the Vidyāsāgara Institution, founded by the illustrious Īśvara Candra Vidyāsāgara at Calcutta. He passed the F.A. examination in the first division, securing a Government Scholarship of twenty rupees a month. Deep contemplation, love for truth, and a deep spiritual hankering were some of the striking features of his life during his college days. When he was a student of the first year class and had already discarded orthodoxy, he no doubt kept himself away from the offshoots of the Young Bengal movement, from the Brāhmo Samāja, and from the then strong Christian proselytising agitation. But the monotheistic views of these movements, and their opposition to orthodox Hinduism, took a deep hold of his mind. Later on, however, there was a further change noticed in him. He began to doubt the very existence of God, and turned an agnostic. But this was only a temporary phase in his groping for a path at that time. He returned to monotheism and joined the Brāhmo Samāja, getting himself duly initiated in 1877.

His Higher Education; Tārākishore as a College Professor :

Tārākishore passed the B.A. and M.A. examinations in 1879 and 1881, respectively, from the Presidency College. Having thus completed his college education, he engaged himself as a teacher in the City School and then in the City College. He was a very popular and respected teacher. The high moral ideals which he inculcated into the students made him the object of their great esteem. Later on, his orthodox father, who was very anxious to get him back into the old ways of life, came over to Benares and wrote to his son to meet him there. Tārākishore went to Benares and his innate spirituality made him establish personal contacts with the great spiritual personalities of the place, viz., Trailaṅga Svāmī, Bhāṣkarānanda Svāmī, and others. While at Benares he took daily his bath in the holy Ganges and visited the temples, but all this could not have any transforming effect on his mind. Tārākishore's father returned to his village home in sheer disappointment that he had failed to make his son return to orthodox Hinduism, and Tārākishore himself also came back to Calcutta.

His Entrance into Yogin Sect; His Yogic Practices and Ṣaṭ-cakra-bheda :

But Tārākishore's heart had yet to gain an equipoise. Doubts continued to stir his heart. The

Benares sojourn with its experiences was a living memory. His search for the correct path, he felt, could not be achieved by what he was at the time. He began gradually to realise the importance of having a *guru* and regular *dīkṣā* for true spiritual advancement. His sagging faith in the principles of Hinduism was greatly strengthened again. In 1882, he joined a particular sect of *yogins* and practised breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*) for a long time as a part of the necessary spiritual discipline. He got himself initiated by a saintly householder named Jagatcandra Sen, whose instructions, backed with appropriate practical examples, produced a wonderful change in him within a short time. As a result of this change, he became able to have a continued automatic breathing activity within his body. In course of time a great power seemed to assert itself within him. The six psychic centres, associated with the *kuṇḍalinī*, the serpentine spiritual power in man, spoken of earlier in this work, were roused in him and came under his control. His *guru* told him expressly that in him, on account of his innate spiritual powers, all the centres had been transcended.[1] Though he was intrinsically and really a *yogin* even at this time, his formal ties with the Brāhmo Samāja, which looked askance at all the esoteric practices of Hinduism, were maintained as before. It is said that during this period the great Vijayakṛṣṇa also had come in touch with this saintly young man who has spiritually benefited by the former.

1. S.J., pp. 50, 81.

His Relation with Brāhmo Samāja and Re-acceptance of Sacred Thread :

An indication of how his mind was in a state of ferment at this time may be had from the fact, that during this period, he abided by the persuasion of his father and decided to put on again the sacred thread, the religious insignia of the superior status of the Brāhmin. He had discarded it under the strong impress of monotheism or agnosticism, which had alternately gripped his mind earlier. He had also rejected his elders' appeal and persuasion to put it on again. His decision now to wear it showed that his intellectual and spiritual adventures in the exotic worlds of monotheism and agnosticism had proved unavailing and left him cold. Hence there could not be anything else other than a return to the fold of the traditional Hindu religion. The decision to put on the sacred thread showed that the Prodigal Son had finally come back home. His warm interest in the Brāhmo Samāja lost its former intensity, for he felt that even in the Samāja there was not one who could claim to have obtained a direct vision of God. About his ancestral religious fold, though he began to use the sacred thread, he could not regard himself as one in the mainstream of the Hindu society. What deeply agonized him was the ever-present apprehension that both rationally and spiritually he was nowhere, neither in one society nor in the other. Due to his changed attitude of warmth towards Brāhmoism, he resigned his post in the City College, which was a Brāhmo-dominated institution, established with the express aim

of preaching, through its education, the Brāhmo faith and ideals.

Tārākishore as a Lawyer; His Return to Orthodoxfold and Interest in Bengal Vaiṣṇavism :

In the meantime, in 1884, he passed the Law Examination and qualified as a pleader. At the request of his father he joined the bar at Sylhet. He practised as a lawyer for three years at that place before he came to Calcutta and joined the High Court. At Sylhet he was secretary of a leading cultural-spiritual organisation, the Hindu Sabhā, and applied himself in various ways towards the furtherance of its aims. This was also the time when he evinced a keen interest in the *Vaiṣṇava* cult of love and devotion. His faith in Vaiṣṇavism was greatly strengthened as evidenced in the devotion of most of his spare time to a regular study of the masterpieces on the life and teachings of Caitanya, viz., *Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Caitanya Bhāgavata, Caitanya Maṅgala,* etc. His exemplary absorption in Vaiṣṇava philosophy and culture was an object lesson to all; it created an atmosphere of devotion in the circles where he moved. His attitude to the Hindu society was by this time radically changed from the earlier distrust to a deep faith, and the society itself began to look upon him as one very much its own. At the suggestion of his father, and also out of a sense of duty, he went through a course of expiatory penances (*prāyaścitta*), to purge himself of all the sins he had committed

on account of his past lapses in respect to the faithful observance of the scriptural (*śāstric*) injuctions.

Along with these purificatory rites, one of the most important features of his practical interest in the *Vaiṣṇava* devotion was his holding of and participation in the holy chanting of God's Name and the other divine lore (*kīrtana*). His inspiring presence in the *kīrtana* parties had invariably the effect of producing great enthusiasm in the hearts of all the members of the party. His deep devotion was indeed very catching. The intensity of his devotional states of self-absorption (*bhāvas*) produced an instantaneous and electrifying effect on all those who happened to touch him at those moments. He felt clearly within himself, just as others felt in themselves, that the power acquired by him through *yoga-sādhanā* was like a living current transmitted to those who embraced him producing the same devotional effect.[2]

His Return to Calcutta and Deeper Yoga-sādhanā; His Vision :

Tārākishore came down to Calcutta in 1887, and was enrolled in the High Court the next year. At that time his inherent psycho-spiritual energy was working up in the direction of the *sahasrāra*, which marks the highest state of spiritual elevation. In those days he practised his *sādhanā*, basically along

2. S.J., p. 81.

the *Vaiṣṇava* path of devotion, but certainly with an intermixture of *yogic* practices, in company with his brothers-in-faith (*guru-bhāi*). Great powers sprang within him as a result of this practice. The practice of devotion along the *Vaiṣṇava* path, combined with *yoga-sādhanā*, was continued by him for about twelve years, till 1894, when he came to realise that he had acquired along the above path of *sādhanā* what it had the potentiality to give him. In spite of all these powers, he felt that the actual vision of God was yet a distant prospect. His mind, therefore, naturally felt the urge for a great Self-realised preceptor (*sadguru*), capable of guiding him in God-realisation. Hoping to gain light from the great saint, Vijayakṛṣṇa, Tārākishore came into close touch with him. Vijayakṛṣṇa had been fortunate to be blessed with a *sadguru*'s grace. What exactly transpired at this meeting, we do not know. But Tārākishore's eagerness and solicitude for the guidance and illumination from a *sadguru* became so great that he made up his mind to cast off his worldly life and go out on a pilgrimage in which, he thought, by God's Grace, he might find what he wanted.

An incident in his life during these days was remarkable. He used to go to the bank of the Ganges very often, where wrought in the deepest humility and devotion, and in deep silence he breathed out to God his inmost cravings. Once, on a summer day in the year 1891, while going to the Ganges, he came across a Muslim *faqīr* who accosted him and suggested, as if he knew everything, that whatever

sādhanā he might have been practising could well be done at home, and that it was not necessary for the purpose to come out and brave the hot sun. As Tārākishore was not easily swayed from his personal habits, he did not pay much heed to the *faqīr*'s words and went to the Ganges, where on the bank he sat in meditation, as on other days, continuously for some length of time. In his meditation on that day, however, he had a vision of the River Goddess (*Gaṅgādevī*) and *Umā-Maheśvara*, *i.e.*, *Śiva* in company with his consort *Umā*. *Maheśvara* gave him a one-syllabled *mantra* (*ekākṣarī-bīja*) and said to him that the continued practice of that *mantra* would surely help him in finding a *sadguru*.[3]

His Pilgrimage and Initiation under Rāmadāsa Kāṭhiyā Bābā :

After this incident, Tārākishore gave up the idea of renouncing the householder's life. Next year he lost his father and shortly afterwards, he went out on a pilgrimage to the holy places like Gayā, Vārānasī, etc. In 1894 he visited the great Kumbha Fair of Prayāga (Allahabad), where he met the great saint, Rāmadāsa Kāṭhiyā Bābā. The deeply spiritualised soul that the venerable Bābā was, Tārākishore's yearning heart could not resist his spell. He became deeply attached to Kāṭhiyā Bābā, and after the Fair, went to

3. S.J., p. 95.

Vṛndāvana to see the great saint again. His attraction, however, did not immediately materialise into the decision that he would seek initiation (*dīkṣā*) from the saint. He returned to Calcutta and devoted himself to meditation on the *mantra* received from *Maheśvara*. Once on a certain night he was relaxing on the terrace of his house. He was all alone. He saw to his great astonishment that a luminous figure, coming out of the sky, was gradually approaching him. It was really a wonderful sight. As the distance was cut off and the figure loomed large before him, Tārākishore could recognise that the saint of Vṛndāvana, Kāṭhiyā Bābā, was standing before him. The saint after offering him a *mantra* immediately vanished. Tārākishore could not see him any more.[4] This was really the heaven-sent moment of his life. The preceptor whose dreams he had dreamt, had come to him in a vision and initiated him. The long-cherished desire of his heart was fulfilled. After this great incident, he, with his wife, left for Vṛndāvana and took a formal *dīkṣā* from Rāmadāsa Kāṭhiyā Bābā on August 14, 1894.

His Practice as a Lawyer and His Literary Works :

Tārākishore practised in the High Court of Calcutta for about twenty-eight years with great distinction, and was very highly spoken of by such public

4. S.J., p. 110.

leaders and *doyens* of the bar as Bepin Candra Pāl, Rāshbehārī Ghose, Brajalāl Śāstrī, Manmatha Mukherjee, and others. He was a very successful lawyer and his reputation in the field was great indeed. Another side of his genius also began to bloom. That he was equally proficient in producing works of high value on theological and spiritual subjects was evinced from his writing in Bengali a number of books including *Brahmavādī Ṛṣi-O-Brahmavidyā, Dārśanika Brahmavidyā* (in three parts), *Guru-śiṣya-saṁvāda, Svāmī Rāmadāsa Kāṭhiyā Bābājī Mahārājer Jīvanacarita, etc.*

His Post-initiation Activities :

In course of twelve years after his *dīkṣā*, he performed the religious ceremony of circumambulation or going round (*parikramā*) of Braja, the holy place of the *Vaiṣṇavas*, twice, with his wife and other devotees (*bhaktas*). In 1897, Kāṭhiyā Bābā installed the image (*vigraha*) of Rādhāvihārī, a form of Kṛṣṇa, at Vṛndāvana and assured his disciple Tārākishore that Rādhāvihārī was sure to appear before him in a vision at the appropriate time.

Tārākishore's Sādhanā and Siddhi :

Tārākishore was then staying at Calcutta, but he would visit Vṛndāvana every year during the High Court vacations. His detachment from the world became progressively stronger and stronger and he made up his mind finally to renounce the world

once and for all. The day he arrived at this fateful and irrevocable decision, he had, at night, the vision about which his *guru* had assured him earlier. Tārākishore's mind was filled with an ineffable joy and bliss. When he came to Vṛndāvana subsequently, he communicated the news of his vision to his *guru*. He was told that it was only a reflection, merely a simulacrum and the true vision would follow later on. Kāṭhiyā Bābā left for his heavenly home in 1910. The construction of the Bābā's *āśrama* at Vṛndāvana was completed posthumously in 1915, when a temple was erected and the image of Rādhā-vihārījī was removed there. In 1915, Tārākishore renounced his home forever and began to live in the *āśrama* at Vṛndāvana with his wife. This was the most crucial as well as the most intense period of his spiritual life. He spent all his time in meditation (*dhyāna*), in *japa*, and in the regular services (*sevā*) of the Deity. There is a record in the form of a diary, which he used to maintain, of his course of *sādhanā* for two years from 1918 to 1920. This diary, which is a revealing document, has been utilised by us in the next section. Sometime in the course of these two years, he was blessed with the true vision of the Divine as prophesied by his *guru*.

His Adoption of Sannyāsa; Tārākishore Known as 'Bābājī Santadāsa'; His Passing Away :

Thereafter, at the request of the various abbots of monasteries (*mahanta*) of Vṛndāvana, Tārākishore

assumed a life of a *sannyāsin* and came to be known as 'BĀBĀJĪ SANTADĀSA'. He was raised to the position of a *mahanta* of the *āśrama*. He sent his wife to Benares, where she died in 1929. From 1920 to 1922, he visited the holy places of pilgrimage (*tīrthas*) in India. In 1920 he attended the Kumbha Fair at Nasik. It was from this year that he began to initiate his disciples. Santadāsa passed away at a ripe old age in 1935.

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Santadāsa's Sādhanā at Vṛndāvana :

It has already been noted that Bābājī Mahārāj, or as he is better known, Santadāsa Bābājī, when he was a practising lawyer and was a householder, took his *dīkṣā* from Rāmadāsa Kāṭhiyā Bābā. This was in 1894. To his innate spirituality, this was an intensifying and accelerating circumstance. He pursued an intensive practice of spiritual *sādhanā* even in the midst of his busy legal practice. He was regular in his habits and a strict observer of high moral principles in his everyday life. A detailed account of the nature of his spiritual practice, during the period following immediately his *dīkṣā*, cannot be possibly given, owing to the extreme paucity of materials. But it is evident even from the meagre data available to us that his inner life, which was in deep ferment and in the throes of an evolution, was very strenuous. His great preceptor, Kāṭhiyā Bābājī, died

in 1910, and the Nimbārka *aśrama* at Vṛndāvana was completed in 1915. Thereafter Santadāsa left the householder's life and proceeded to Vṛndāvana, where he made the *āśrama* his home for the rest of his life, having taken upon himself the responsibility of its administration and of service to the Deity (*Rādhā-vihārīji*) installed therein.

Santadāsa's Diary :

It is said that the period from 1915 to about 1920 was the best and most creative period of his life with regard to inner spiritual activities. A small notebook, purporting to be a collection of the stray pages from *Santadāsa's Diary*, referred to above, has been discovered. The authenticity of this document is unimpeachable. It contains short but systematic notes on the manner in which Santadāsa spent his time during this period. It seems that the course of his *sādhanā*, as thus described, was not a series of unconnected and spasmodic activities, but was a regulated ascending path based on a carefully adjusted ideological planning and inspiration.

At Vṛndāvana, Santadāsa devoted most of his time to the worship of the Deity and other works connected with the temple service. The rest of the time was spent in *japa* and *dhyāna*. It may be of some interest to know that his wife was a willing partner with him in his *sādhanā*. When on his adoption of *sannyāsa*, his wife left his company at Vṛndāvana

and came to Benares, Santadāsa carried on the work single-handed, and performed every duty connected with the *āśrama*. If on one side he did the scavenger's duty, he also did the cooking, daily worship, and nursing of the sick. He slept very little, and the nights were usually spent in deep meditation.

Santadāsa's mind was always illuminated by the living flame of his departed preceptor. In the midst of all his works he always remembered with gratitude and tears in his eyes the blessings of, and the confidence instilled into him by, his master,[5] regarding the certainty and inevitability of his Realisation (*siddhi*) and Divine Vision (*bhagavad-darśana*). Santadāsa was never tired of saying that whatever success he attained was entirely due to the grace of his *guru*. The life he led was of a dedicated ascetic. He took only one meal a day, consisting of barley flour (about 200 gms.). He did not take pulse, vegetables of any kind, or even salt. Most of the time he would remain quiet, observing a vow of silence. When he felt tired, he found relaxation in the study of the *Bhāgavata* and of the *Upaniṣads*. Every work

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5. The words of his *guru*, addressed to him in 1897, were :
(*a*) '*tomār niścaya paramātmā darśan haive*'.
"You are sure to have God's vision in time."
(*b*) '*bhagavān niścayai aharniśi chāyār nyāya tomār saṅge saṅge āchen*'.
"God verily will be accompanying you day and night like a shadow." These words, like sparks coming from the spiritual source, always kept him in vigilance, and guarded him from slackening his efforts.

for the *āśrama* was welcome to him; even scouring of the utensils was not felt by him as below his dignity.

In February 1917, Tārākishore began to realise within himself the incoming and the outgoing, in an alternating manner, of different spiritual states. He resigned himself to the Will of God and tried to remain content with his lot. He had certainly spared no pains to make himself spiritually pure, yet what he felt was that his efforts did not count much. But the serene confidence never left him that the grace of his *guru* would finally carry him through. At every turn of life, his gratefulness to his *guru* knew no bounds.

Santadāsa's Close Association with Pātañjala-Yoga System :

Santadāsa realised a special spiritual state on *Māgha* 21, 1323 B.S. (1916 A.D.) — but even then the knot of his heart was not loosened. The psychological state in which he was at the time, and the direction in which his mind was working may be stated as per the formulations arrived at by Patañjali in his *Yoga-sūtras* — though in Santadāsa's case the terms were invested with new connotations, as follows :

(1) *Śraddhā*

It is faith in the assurance given to him by the *guru*, and the resultant suffusion of the mind with contentment and reverence.

(2) *Vīrya* :

Discarding of lethargy, and constant effort for realisation, arising out of faith and contentment.

(3) *Smṛti*

It is the memory of or meditation upon the desired object, inspired by faith and constant effort. Without this absolutely essential and constant memory (*smṛti*), neither faith nor any energy (*vīrya*) is of any avail.

(4) *Samādhi*

Memory (*smṛti*) leads to concentration and *samādhi*. If *samādhi* does not occur, it is to be understood that the first three realities enumerated above have not been properly cultivated.

(5) *Prajñā*

Samādhi leads to universal illumination (*prajñā*). In the absence of this light, *samādhi* cannot be recognised as genuine; *samādhi* then is nothing but a mere trance.

(6) *Asamprajñāta*

The stability of *prajñā*, *i.e.*, universal illumination, causes the mind to be still and free from all modes and activities, and therefore free from impressions.

(7) *Bhagavad-darśana*

> When the mind is still, God reveals Himself. This is Self-realisation.[6]

Santadāsa on Virtue, Vice, and Other Ethical Problems :

From what has been said above, it should be clear that Santadāsa's spiritual pursuit and its progress had their basis in the implicit faith in his *guru* and his ever-unclouded goal of Divine Realisation. While on this path, he always tried to keep in view certain factors as calculated to be of help to him in his onward progress. The cardinal virtues that he was to cultivate were faith and contentment, as already mentioned; and the cardinal vices to be shunned were those traits of character which always stand in the way of cultivation of these virtues. The first vice against which he was ever on guard was dabbling in and sitting in judgment over other people's character, and in cherishing in the mind or openly expressing a sense of hatred for them. He felt within himself that the habit of finding faults with others only darkened one's own mind. He believed that, as the Divine Principle actuates from behind the human mind, nobody should be considered, by a true seeker after God, as essentially good or bad, *i.e.*, as deserving of praise or blame. Instead, a true seeker after God was required to interpret every action of man

6. S.J., pp. 251-252.

as part and parcel of the harmony of the Divine, and try to feel sincerely delighted in it. Besides blaming others, the habit of self-praise was also a serious defect of character, which he considered as deserving of correction.

For practical purposes, Santadāsa's views on knowledge and ignorance are also interesting. In his view, and as he realised it at that time, the knowledge that God is the creator and controller of the entire universe was the only knowledge; it was rather foolishness and an act of presumption on the part of a man to give instruction to others without being asked for it. He felt that a man who was unable to correct himself through moral instruction was not entitled to preach morality to others. The only guidance, he said, came from the Divine and was given to all. There was no justification, therefore, to go out of one's own way to preach morality and wisdom to other people. To attempt it, or even a desire for it, originated in an overwhelming confidence in one's own self, which is another name for egoism and hypocrisy. During the days of intense *sādhanā*, Santadāsa was always on his guard against laziness and inaction. He felt that, by itself, no action was beneath one's dignity. There was absolutely no question of respect or disrespect in engaging oneself in an act of service.[7]

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7. S.J., pp. 252-253.

Santadāsa on Meditation and Its Fourfold Objective, and Kriyā-Yoga :

Meditation and *japa* form an integral part of the system of *sādhanā* practised and inculcated by Santadāsa. Meditation, thus, in the light of his progressive realisation, calls for a detailed discussion. Meditation, according to Santadāsa, has a fourfold object, *i.e.*, there were four objects on which meditation was to be based :

(*a*) The Supreme God as represented in the personality of the *guru*, who becomes the only friend of the seeker.

(*b*) *Viṣṇu*, the Lord of *Braja*, and His *Śakti*, incarnated in *Viṣṇu's* Divine Consort.

(*c*) The infinite forms or incarnations taken by *Viṣṇu* out of His compassion for humanity.

(*d*) The Supreme God's support, viz., *Para Brahman* seen as the Supreme Self who represented the end of the infinite forms and was eternal Bliss and Consciousness.[8]

Santadāsa tried to avoid hypocrisy by all means and strictly observed reticence and truthfulness. He considered that all activities and enjoyments were man's humble offerings at His feet and not for self-satisfaction. He continued silent prayers (*japa*) throughout his life as an essential element in *sādhanā*

8. S.J., p. 253.

and also tried to practise equanimity, self-discipline, self-surrender, renunciation, and unceasing meditation on the True.

The conception of *kriyā-yoga*, consisting of penance and austerities (*tapas*), reading of holy texts (*svādhyāya*), silent recitation of *mantras* (*japa*), and dedication of everything to God, the Supreme Creator and the Supreme Controller, was what he strongly favoured and what he followed in actual practice.[9]

His Further Elaboration on the Concept of Meditation :

Later on, Santadāsa, having made further progress in regard to the practice of meditation, elaborated it; this may be stated as follows :

(1) The *mantra* received from the *guru* is to be identified with *Brahman*. The devotee should meditate on his own self as identical with *Brahman*. The world is also to be considered as identical with *Brahman* on the basis of a statement in the *Gītā* : *Vāsudeva sarvamiti*, *i.e.*, *Vāsudeva* (God) is all in all.

(2) The meditator as a devotee should regard himself as a part of *Brahman*.

(3) God is to be meditated upon as a regulator of the world and also as its cause, both efficient and material. It is thus evident that, everything being *Brahman*, the devotee him-

9. S.J., pp. 254-255.

self also is *Brahman* and so also are the other *jīvas*. All being equally *Brahman*, the primary stage of one's meditation should be founded upon the vision of equality and harmony. It also follows that every action having its fountainhead in *Brahman*, it is unwise and erroneous to feel elated or depressed at one's own actions and to praise or blame the conduct of others. The propensity should, therefore, be discouraged. The steady attitude of mind, as pointed out above, is to be gradually developed until it leads to an attitude of equality regarding the so-called saints and sinners. In his own life, during this period, Santadāsa tried seriously to steer clear of egoism on the one hand and mental depression on the other. Subsequently the sole object of meditation left to him was the blissfulness, omnipresence, and omniscience of the Divine Power. It was accompanied by meditation on his own Self as identical with *Para Brahman*. Thereafter, he began to feel himself as the only agent in this world — like God Himself — so that there was no ground for any kind of misgivings.[10]

Santadāsa's Further Meditation on Brahman :

Starting from the above premises and continuing his meditation ceaselessly for a few months, Santadāsa

10. S.J., p. 256.

realised that the path chosen by him was correct and that he had attained a degree of spiritual elevation. More illumination had come into his mind, too. What he felt at this stage may be summed up as follows :

(*a*) The Divine Being is only a Pure Witness (*draṣṭā*) beyond the space of the heart. From there He is constantly fashioning the world out of Himself and then drawing it back into Himself. The present world, a link in the chain of this above cosmic process, is His manifestation.

(*b*) He is within. He is without. He is everything and in everything. Since He is the doer of all, it is no use bothering oneself about how a particular work is to be carried on or how a particular object is to be kept.[11] From this it is clear that the nature of Santadāsa's meditation at that time was on the basis of the teaching of the *Gītā* :

ātmasaṁsthaṁ manaḥ kṛtvā na kiñcidapi cintayet.[12]

With the mind fully concentrated on the spirit, its gaze turned completely inward, and with the rejection of desires and predispositions, one needs rise above all process of thinking.

11. S.J., p. 257.
12. VI. 25.

Santadāsa's Threefold Sādhanā; Tridaṇḍa :

Santadāsa's pursuit of the spiritual goal along the path of meditation bore fruit. He gained a deeper knowledge and his path gained an amplitude. The important milestone which marked his evolution as a *sādhaka* was his adoption of the threefold *sādhanā* on *Pauṣa Saṁkrānti*, the last day of the month of *Pauṣa*, 1323 B.S. (1916 A.D.). This *sādhanā* he cryptically called '*tridaṇḍa*', the three rods, meaning its threefold path — the rod of restraint, the rod of support to enable further progress, and the rod, the churning stick to bring out the best in him. The *tridaṇḍa* comprised the following :

(*a*) *Vāk-daṇḍa*

It is restraint of speech.

(*b*) *Karma-daṇḍa*

It is the worship of the Deity and service of the inmates of the *āśrama*.

(*c*) *Mano-daṇḍa*

It is an all-out effort to rest in the Universal Self. The starting point is the awareness of the nucleus of the Self within: the lotus-shaped psycho-spiritual centre at the heart. With this awareness there is the necessity of self-expansion, a power inherent in the divine nature of the Self, from *brahmarandhra*, the highest point of the universe (*brahmāṇḍa*) to its lowest reaches. The Self

being nothing but *Brahman*, the body, the senses, and the mind of the seeker as well as of others, as Santadāsa felt with a thrill, were also *Brahman*, being objects of perception (*dṛśya*). The controller of both being *Brahman*, all that existed emanated from *Brahman* and was the manifestation of *Brahman*. *Mano-daṇḍa*, he said, was the cultivation of unbroken contentment, coming as a fruit of the above realisation. This actively contributed towards the stability and steadiness of the mind (*brāhmī-sthiti*), and there was no thinking on objects unworthy of being thought upon, as that would have detracted from the contentment.[13]

Santadāsa's Further Sādhanā :

Later on, Santadāsa began to feel that the human body was not limited, for it had infinite layers or planes in it, each being a part of an infinite world. When meditation reached the plane in which infinitude revealed itself as a living reality, the existing human body was converted into an infinite cosmic body. It was in every sense the greatest psycho-spiritual rebirth, when one came to realise that the Divine Self in him pervaded the universe. The lotus in the seeker's heart was really the miniature of the lotus heart of the universe; and this realisation held

13. S.J., pp. 258-259.

up before the mind the uniquely resplendent vision of the individual self established in the heart of the Universal Self. The Self first manifested itself, Santadāsa said from his own realisation, as a subtle light with a flash. But lightning-like and evanescent, it vanished in him. He felt, however, that a ceaseless and steady existence in the essence of the individual self (with the flitting flash gone from it), had also a potentiality in it, and in all probability might reveal the essence of the Universal Self. In this state, through which he himself passed, he felt the state of the individual self as a state of unconcern and indifference. That is, it was a state in which the mind was absolutely steady, *sans souci* and serene.

He also felt that if he could experience his own body as the universal body, he would realise that all his actions were really the actions of the Controller, *i.e.*, of the Divine, and that the individual soul within it was only a witness. Stability in this meditation led him to a state of rest in the Eternal Essence (*sattva*) above the duality of Nature. All desires disappeared of themselves. He engrossed himself in the meditation of *Para Brahman*, the inmost controller of all individual bodies and of the cosmic body. This was his attainment of that steadiness and serenity, beyond all description, to be enjoyed through a rest and absorption in *Brahman* (*brāhmī-sthiti*) which Santadāsa by his *sādhanā* achieved.[14]

14. S.J., pp. 259-260.

Santadāsa's Review of His Own Spiritual Progress :

Santadāsa's review of his own spiritual progress shows that even in February 1918, the spiritual states appeared to be fluctuating and intermittent, without leaving any permanent effect behind. But Santadāsa was undaunted. He never looked back or doubted. The echo of his *guru*'s assurance was always ringing in his heart, viz, 'the knots of the heart will be let loose in time.' It continued to echo till the day of his fulfilment. With exemplary perseverance in the steady performance of the duties without caring for the results, he carried on his *sādhanā*. He was very particular regarding the evil of passions, and tried to devote himself entirely to mental concentration, keeping the mind steadily concentrated in the Self, along with freedom from all desires.

In the light of his own experiences, Santadāsa places a special emphasis on the culture of the following virtues :

(1) Freedom from hatred in respect to all; friendliness and compassion for all; freedom from the sense of possession and the sense of ego.

(2) Equanimity in the midst of joys and sorrows.

(3) Forgiveness.

(4) Quiet; contentment; strength of will and resolution; surrender of the mind to the Divine.

Santadāsa on Brahman and Brahman-realisation :

Santadāsa's realisations made him convinced about the origin of creatures from the Imperishable and Immutable (*akṣara*), *i.e.*, from *Brahman*, like sparks from a flame. All the cosmic principles which form the basis of creation appeared to him, in this manner, from the Immutable (*akṣara*). The highest of these principles was the cosmic consciousness, but the Divine, the Creator, he was sure, was beyond this consciousness and was transcendent. The best of the *yogic* traditions thus inspired Santadāsa's faith.

From a study of *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, Santadāsa had learnt that there were four stages in the realisation of *Brahman*. Evidently the reference here is to the famous passage which elaborates the figure of archery to denote its meaning. These stages were as follows :

(*a*) The communication from the *guru* to the disciple of the esoteric *mantra*, likened to a bow (*praṇavo dhanuḥ*). In other words, the cardinal part of the *mantra* being the mystic syllable *Oṁ*, it by itself serves the same helps purpose as the bow, because as the bow the arrow to dart at a target, the repetition of *Oṁ* helps *ātman* to get fixed in *Brahman*. We may quote the verse below :

praṇavo dhanuḥ śaro hi ātmā
brahma tallakṣyamucyate.
apramattena veddhavyaṁ
śaravat tanmayo bhavet..[15]

15. II., 4.

i.e. Oṁ, the mystic syllable, is the bow; the self within is the arrow; and *Brahman*, the target. One should hit with an undistracted mind, and like the arrow getting transfixed in the target, become one with It.

(*b*) The arrow-like personal consciousness (*śaraḥ hi ātmā*) of the individual soul, rendered taut, sharp, and pure, becoming ready to be fitted to the *mantra*. The basic idea here is that of the individual self (*jīvātman*), which is in essence identical with *Brahman*, but which appears to be limited by the physical and mental adjuncts.

(*c*) Indrawing of this consciousness through the mind devoted exclusively to the Divine. This mind undistracted by worldly thoughts and attachments (*apramattena*) is like the strong arm.

(*d*) Realising *Brahman* — This is transfixing of the target aimed at.[16]

The target is *Brahman*, non-different from the *ātman*; the target (*lakṣya*) for the individual self becomes its own essence. The consummation of the *yogic* path is thus reached. But in this connection it is worthwhile to mention that to those who are worshippers of God in a personal form and whose path generally is that of devotion (*bhakti*) and not the

16. S.J., pp. 260-263.

yogic one, the difference and distance between the self and the object of worship, however, remains. Yet even in regard to them, in the higher stages of devotional meditation, there does come a stage when the mind gets so absorbed in the object of meditation that it loses its identity in the aura of devotion emanating from the devotee's heart and surrounding the Form worshipped.

Santadāsa's Further Sādhanā :

Santadāsa, on account of the purity of his soul and the spirit of humility which arose from it, observed that he was still to achieve the stage mentioned above at (*c*). It meant that something was still wanting in his spiritual life, and that he could not say that he had a mind fully dedicated to the Divine. He felt that the spiritual effort, without which one can never progress towards the realisation of *Brahman*, would not be possible except to a mind which was absolutely dedicated to *Brahman*. The *mantra*, which his *guru* had given him, could be drawn in only through such a mind. Then and then alone would his finite consciousness sally forth towards the infinite consciousness. He pointed out that the movement of the arrow and the striking of the target both depended upon the bending of the bow. The mere act of fitting the arrow to the bow was not enough, for that did not impart any motion to the arrow, for which bending of the bow was essentially needed.

With his mind in deep ferment and his pursuit of the goal becoming more and more an all-absorbing process, the next point which engaged Santadāsa's attention was to discard all forms of social intercourse and verbal communication with others. Similarly he gave up all other aims and ideals, in order to keep in view, in all its clarity and importance, the single aim, the realisation of God. Lest he should fail in his path, he never ceased to implore, from the core of his heart, the grace of his departed *guru*, who had appeared in his life as the divine incarnation.

He chastised himself, lest his spirit be seized with the tendency of shirking action being encouraged by the erroneous notion that God, being the universal agent, would do everything on time, and that individual efforts were unnecessary. Santadāsa felt that inaction implied a state of placidity in respect to the existing order of things, which was basically wrong. It retarded all spiritual progress as a consequence.

So intense was Santadāsa's dedication to his pursuits that he aimed at feeling the presence of *Brahman* pervading all space before him, behind him, on his right side, on his left, above him as well as below him. It was the Inner Self of all objects. This was certainly the mark of a true *yogin*, to whom all that is, is *Brahman*. Santadāsa also felt that the mystical syllable *Oṁ*, with which the *mantra* began (*bīja-mantra*), was the representative of *Para Brahman*. It was, therefore, constantly to be kept within the heart. He meditated on the *bīja-mantra* as a

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bridge which brought about the union with *Para Brahman*.[17]

Santadāsa also realised that the Universal Self was the transcendent witness above the *guṇas* to which the human nature is a slave. Hence his meditation was solely upon the transcendent witness — that serene and blissful meditation by which the objective world he knew was in harmony with the entire world, including himself.

His Views on Doṣa and Guṇa :

All these realisations came to Santadāsa, in the course of his dedicated *sādhanā* along the path and to the goal lighted by his *guru*. As he wended his way, more illumination came to him; a greater knowledge dawned upon his mind. It was during this stage that he discovered certain truths of great value, of which the following are the two :

(*a*) Finding fault with somebody is itself a fault (*doṣa*). It is the habit of finding fault with everybody everywhere without discrimination.

(*b*) Man's suffering is rewarded. It is necessary to have the mental strength to take insult and disrespect with a cheerful heart. Pain and suffering, insult and ignominy, are but God's will. A man's suffering is a prelude to his being showered with God's Grace.

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17. S.J., p. 264.

Santadāsa's New Scheme of Meditation; Three Meditations :

The pursuit went on with unflagging absorption and faith, and, as Santadāsa's diary records, by the third week of May 1917, Santadāsa, in the light of the knowledge already gained, drew up a new scheme of meditation, and set about in right earnest to follow it subsequently. The scheme was threefold, and below we give a brief synopsis of it :

Three Meditations :

No. 1.

(*a*) The object of this meditation is the Cosmic Self (*virāt-puruṣa*) — of whom the universe (*brahmāṇḍa*) with its fourteen planes of existence is as it were the outer body.

(*b*) (*i*) *I* forms a part of this Cosmos (*virāṭ*).

(*ii*) *I* and the Cosmos are the same — the soul of the Cosmos is also the soul in *I*.

The effect of this meditation is to break the barrier of the heart, the seat of embodied consciousness (*dehastha-prāṇa*), brought about by repeated shocks administered to it by the energy (*śakti*) inherent in the Cosmic Self and inherent likewise in the individual self. Thereupon con-

sciousness, being as it were deprived of support (*āśraya*), permeates the entire body. It is at this juncture that one is able to feel truly one's own universal extension (*virāṭ-puruṣa*). It is the unique feeling of one's body being the great empyrean (*mahākāśa*) pervading the whole world.

No. 2

(*a*) There is an Infinite Silent Being like an ocean surrounding the great *ākāśa* referred to above. It is thus significantly called the Infinite Empyrean (*mahākāśa*); and, being beyond all worlds (*lokas*), is transcendent. In the midst of this *mahākāśa*, the universe or the cosmic system is like a glowworm in the sky.

This Silent Being also pervades this universe, which forms a vortex (*ghūrṇi*), as it were, in this Great Ocean of Being. The idea which flashes before the *sādhaka* in the wake of this realisation can be stated thus :

I, as *brahmāṇḍa*, am enveloped on all sides and permeated within by this One and Indivisible Being.

(*b*) Gradually the subsequent realisations are : *I* feels that 'I am *Brahman*', the experiencer of the Bliss, which constitutes the external aspect of that Great Being. *I* am an aspect of Him — not separate from Him. *I* can and have to feel within, in rapt silence, the Infinite Bliss.

No. 3.

The *Brahman* described above, the Infinite Great *Puruṣa*, of the nature of Consciousness and Bliss, is the manifestation of the Supremely Transcendent Being, who is neither great nor small; who is indescribable. This Being is Unmanifest (*aprakāśa*), being the support of the Great *Puruṣa*, and is called *Purāṇa-puruṣa* or *Para Brahman*. He is to be meditated upon as the Transcendent Witness.

We can thus conclude that Santadāsa's meditation, in the above direction, was on the Divine as the omnipresent, all-controlling Pure Being. All kinds of meditations (*dhyāna*) come under this. His further realisations, at this juncture of his life of *sādhanā*, can be synopsised in the following manner. He realised that no object was inherently impure. The statements of the *śāstras* regarding purity and impurity depend on the nature and condition of the soul of the man who judges, for all things are not good for all men. Hence no object is impure in itself. So purity and impurity, good or bad, are not absolute but relative terms. It is for this reason that a *paramahaṁsa* sees everything as pure as *Brahman* itself. Hence no action or no thought or idea is by itself evil. All these three are eternal aspects of the Divine. There can thus be no room for any defect anywhere. Hence for a *jñānin* it is absolutely wrong to see defects in others. Fault-finding is another name for ignorance, and should be completely given up.[18]

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18. S.J., pp. 265-266.

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Santadāsa on Brahman, Jīva, and Māyā :

We have, in the preceding pages, given an outline of the great saint's biographhy, and a *resumé*, based upon the notes in his diary, of the course of his *sādhanā* and his mystic realisations. Our emphasis has been on the golden trail of the Indian mystic tradition on which Santadāsa's pursuit of the One was based, and at the same time to show how illumination often came to him in flashes of deeply personal revelations and discoveries, which he always kept on record from a sense of duty. To all this we have referred earlier. It is now time, we think that we should sum up our account, make a survey of his achievement as a mystic, and give him his due for his high degree of spiritual attainment. Santadāsa's views on *Brahman, Jīva*, and *Māyā*, the pivots on which his mystical realisations are based, may be summed up as follows :

As an advocate of the *Bhedābhedavāda,* of unity-in-difference, Santadāsa says that the Ultimate Principle is undoubtedly one without a second, although there are elements of differences involved in it. *Brahman*, as pure Being, is devoid of all qualities and is, therefore, undefinable. It is devoid of names and forms, though all these exist in It as Being. It is supersensuous and transcendent. But at the same time, this Pure Being is eternally associated with Consciousness-Power (*cit-śakti*), and as such it may be described as the Eternal Subject. It is Existence

(*sat*) and Consciousness (*cit*), which means that the Absolute as Subject (*cit-viśiṣṭa*) always sees Itself. It is blissful — in fact it is Bliss Itself (*ānanda*). It is unique and nothing else exists outside It.

The Consciousness-Power (*cit-śakti*), through which *Brahman* always realises Itself, has been mentioned above. This experience is of a dual nature. It refers to Itself as indivisible (one), and also as infinitely divided (many). It is analogous to the consciousness of one's body as an indivisible one, and also of the several limbs as so many parts of the same body. These two experiences are said to be simultaneous, so that the question never arises why the one Reality sees Itself as many. This is the nature of the Self, which is an evidence of its Perfection.

Brahman's vision of multiplicity is also of two kinds, viz., as aggregate, or as separate units. *Brahman*, seeking itself as the aggregate of infinite units involved in It, is called *Īśvara*; but in so far as It sees each of the Units composing the aforesaid aggregate separately, it is called *Jīva*.

This discrete vision of the *Jīva* is also of a dual nature, in so far as the separate unit is seen in its essential form, *i.e.*, as *Brahman* or in form distinct from Its essence, *i.e.*, either as *Brahman* or as other than *Brahman*. In the former case the *Jīva* is liberated (*mukta*); and in the latter, he is called bound (*baddha*). In the state of bondage, the *Jīva* lacks the knowledge of its own self also. The vision of the visible phenomena as distinct from *Brahman* is called Ignorance or Nescience (*avidyā*).

It should be remembered that the Supreme *Brahman* is always possessed of Consciousness-Power (*cit-śakti*) which belongs to its very essence. This essential Power has been invested with a duality. From one angle, it is called *Īśvara* and from the other, *Jīva*. It is thus evident that the character of *Brahman* as *Īśvara* is eternal, and similar is its character as *Jīva*, the difference between the two being that, while the *Jīva* has one of two states, *viz.*, bound or liberated, *Īśvara* has neither. In other words, *Īśvara* is always in one and the same unchanging state. In the state of bondage, the *Jīva* does not realise either itself or the visible phenomena as identical with *Brahman*. But when *Jīva* is liberated, it attains that realisation. This realisation is an experience of Eternal Bliss. As experience is always present in *Īśvara*, His Bliss is as a matter of course eternal and unceasing. It is also to be remembered that *Īśvara* always experiences this Bliss as identical with *Brahman*.

Santadāsa on Four Aspects of Brahman :

Santadāsa Bābājī Mahārāj, in his analysis of the Supreme *Brahman*, comes to the conclusion that *Brahman* has four aspects co-existing in It, as follows :

(*a*) *Akṣara Brahman*, *i.e.*, Immutable *Brahman*.

(*b*) *Īśvara*, with or without form.

(*c*) *Jīva*, the individual seer, bound or liberated.

(*d*) Insentient world.

These four aspects are explained as under :

(*a*) *Akṣara Brahman*

Akṣara Brahman is the name given to *Brahman* when It realises Itself through Its inherent power of Consciousness as an undifferentiated Ocean of Bliss. This state is indicated in the scriptural statement like : '*yatra sarvamātmaivābhūt tatra kena kam paśyet,*' etc., meaning: Where everything was *ātman* and nothing else, who could be the seen and who the seer ? This is what is known as *Nirguṇa Brahman*.

(*b*) *Īśvara*

But when *Brahman* fully experiences Its Self-Bliss in infinitely different ways through Its Power of Consciousness, It is called *Īśvara*. This is indicated as perceived through the gnosis of *bhūmā-vidyā* in the *Upaniṣads*. In this condition *Brahman* is called *Bhagavān* or *Vāsudeva*.

The two aspects of *Brahman*, viz., *Akṣara* or *Nirguṇa* and *Īśvara* are formless (*a-mūrta*), the former being the higher and the latter, the lower. Bābājī Mahārāj points out that there is also an experience in which the essential *ānanda* of *Brahman* is not realised as identical with its essence, but only as actual object or possible object of infinite kinds of enjoyment through the Power of Consciousness (*cit-śakti*). This state is named differently according to the difference in the experiences involved. It is also known as *Mahāvirāṭ ānanda* or *Hiraṇyagarbha*. When the essential Bliss is experienced as an actual object of enjoyment,

it is known as the waking condition of *Hiraṇyagarbha*; and when it is experienced only as a possible object, it represents his sleeping condition, and is also called *Prakṛti-laya*. The latter state is popularly known as *Nārāyaṇa*. The *Hiraṇyagarbha* state marks the Supreme Form of the Divine (*para-mūrta*).

(*c*) *Jīva*

Jīva is the name given to *Brahman* when It experiences Its own Bliss, through the corresponding states of Its Consciousness-Power in multiple ways, all distinguished from each other. This vision is imperfect, as distinguished from the perfect vision of *Īśvara*. The stage in which *Jīva* retains its character as a self-conscious being, and in which it shines as a discrete unit of conscious bliss having an individual experience, represents the condition of liberation. In this condition, it attains its identity with *Īśvara* in all respects, except that the *Jīva* has a partial vision, while *Īśvara* is possessed of integral vision. But when the self-consciousness, referred to above, is not apparent, and when consequently *Jīva* realises itself as endowed with a consciousness which identifies itself with the body, it is described as a state of bondage.

(*d*) *Jagat*

The essential bliss of *Brahman* actually experienced as an object, or capable of being experienced as an object, of enjoyment through a particular state of its Consciousness-Power, is known

as the World (*jagat*) which is unconscious and lifeless. The World is the manifested aspect of *Brahman*.

Santadāsa on the Method of Approach to Mystic Realisation :

When the mystic is able to realise himself as the essence of *Brahman*, as stated above, everything appears to him as *Brahman* Itself. The mystic then feels himself to be a part of *Brahman* and consequently dependent upon it. Bābājī Mahārāj says that this conception of *Brahman* leads to the following conclusions in regard to the methods of approach to the supreme Mystic Realisations :

(*a*) The *jīva* should try to establish itself in the consciousness that *Brahman* is identical with *jīva*.

(*b*) The *jīva* should recognise the entire world and every creature belonging to it as a manifestation of *Brahman*.

(*c*) The *jīva* should not, therefore, find fault with anything or anybody.

(*d*) Knowing well that all others, viz., the parents, spouse, children, neighbours, fellow-men, etc., are manifestations of *Brahman*, the *jīva* must be devoted to their service.

(*e*) The *jīva* is expected to remain, in the midst of all its activities, calm and undisturbed.

This course of self-discipline is intended to purify the mind and give rise to Supreme *bhakti* (*parā-bhakti*), the result of which will be an establishment of the human soul in *Akṣara Brahman* and attainment of Supreme *Mokṣa*. This is the way to Self-realisation.

For those, however, who are unable to follow the above method, it is desirable to keep in view the essential character of *Brahman* as outlined above, and surrender themselves without any reserve or qualification to the Form of *Śrī Kṛṣṇa*, meditate on His Form, receive formally His Name from a *sadguru* and repeat it unceasingly, and perform every action as an humble servant with a view to propitiating Him. This Form is said to have been assumed by the Divine for the well-being of the present cosmic system.

If even this method proves to be too elevated to be grasped, it is recommended that a man should, if there is a desire for emancipation and if there has been a fortunate contact with a *sadguru*, surrender himself unconditionally to him and try to carry out in an unquestioning spirit his commands, without bothering about the possible consequences. This too is calculated to lead one to the Supreme Consummation.

Santadāsa on Guru, Dīkṣā, and the Process of Sādhanā:

Santadāsa says that a competent *guru* must be a person belonging to a direct line hallowed by connection with the ancient *ṛṣis*, who had immediate vision

of God. It is said that immediately after creation, the Divine Principle manifested Itself as *guru* with perfect Self-knowledge, and taught Supreme Wisdom (*Brahmavidyā*) with a view to enabling the first-created to realise its essence. Besides, the Principle also invested power in the *guru* so that the latter might give a practical form to this Wisdom in qualified disciples. This power has all along been transmitted from master to pupil in an unbroken chain. A person who has had no access to this transmitted power will not be able to lead the disciple along the path of liberation, though nevertheless he may be highly powerful and wise. It is also to be remembered that the Wisdom, spoken of above, does not bear fruit unless it comes through a process of *dīkṣā*. Santadāsa is emphatic on the point that the realisation of *Brahman*, in the true sense of the term, is practically impossible for a man who has not been truly initiated.

Just as a qualified *guru* has certain well-defined distinguishing characteristics, in the same way a qualified disciple (*śiṣya*) also has certain distinguishing features. The most important quality in a good disciple is faith (*śraddhā*) in the words of the teacher. Among other qualities, the most important are discrimination (*viveka*), simplicity and openness (*ārjava*), meekness (*akiñcanatva*), absolute reliance on the *guru* (*ananya-gatitā*), detachment from worldly objects (*nirvāha*), purity (*śauca*), etc.[19]

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19. G.S.S., 2nd Ed., pp. 197-199.

Nimbrāka, the great exponent of the *Bhedābheda* school of philosophy (12th Century A.D.), on whose teachings Santadāsa based his *sādhanā*, gave a very illuminating account of the relation between the master (*guru*) and the disciple (*śiṣya*).

He said :

ādau gurau nyaset prāṇānātmānaṁ dhanameva ca .
sarvasambandhaviṣayaṁ kṛtvā seveta nityaśaḥ ..
dehendriyamanaḥ prāṇairmāyāṁ hitvā samāhitaḥ .
bhṛtyavat putravat sevet priyāvanmitravattathā ..
yā deyā guruṇā vidyā bhavasambandha dhvaṁsinī .
tāṁ taduktena mārgeṇa dhārayedvaiṣṇavottamaḥ ..[20]

The first thing the disciple has to do is to dedicate his life, soul, and wealth to the *guru,* and to continue to serve him as the object of his affection as a servant, as a son, as a friend, and as a beloved wife. The *guru,* pleased with the services of the disciple and his qualifications, bestows on him the secret of *Brahmavidyā*, the Supreme Knowledge, which the latter has to receive in his heart.

In Santadāsa's life this was realised to the letter. From his first meeting with the great Kāṭhiyā Bābā, through his visionary meeting and formal initiation, to the last day of his life, it was his unshakable faith in his *guru* which carried him through to a great wealth of spiritual wisdom and a successful ascent along

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20. G.S.S., 2nd Ed., pp. 199-200.

the *yogic-mystic* path to Self-realisation. His own great achievements apart, which by themselves are enough to give him a high place among the mystics of our land, and his almost ideal attachment to his *guru*, must always remain as a model in this respect to all those who think in terms of mysticism towards an endeavour for spiritual elevation. By far the most sought-after saint in his lifetime, he will always be a refulgent light of guidance, encouragement, and inspiration to posterity.

Chapter IX

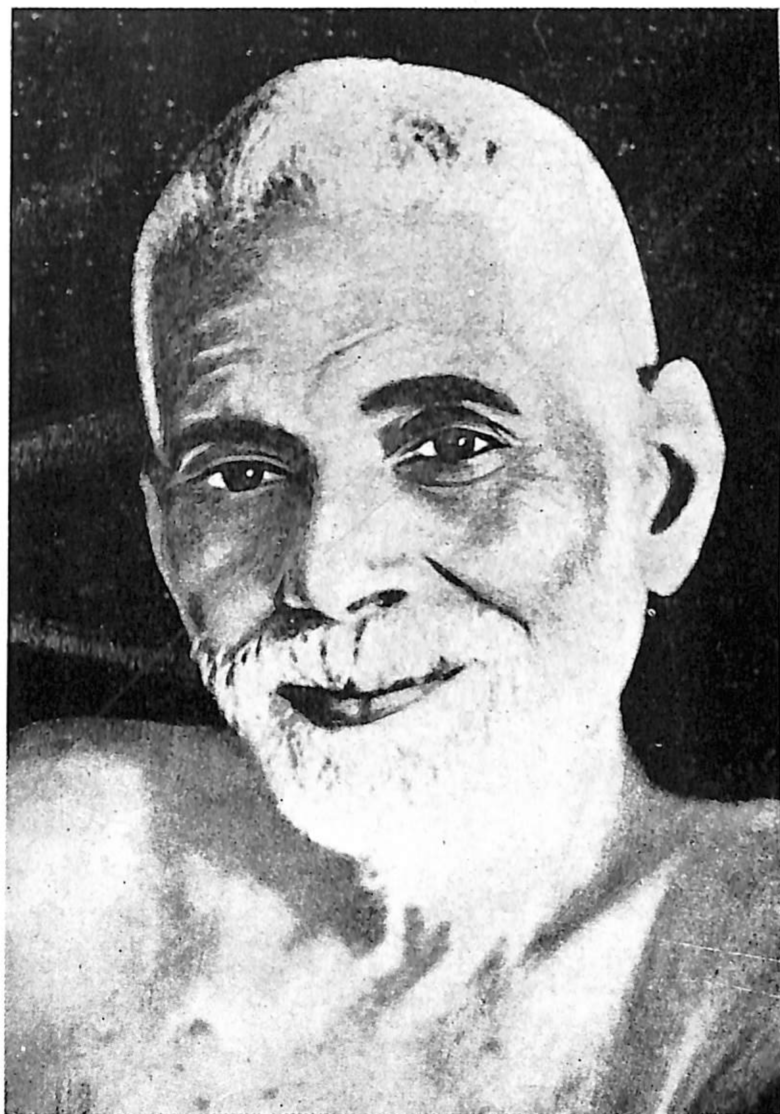
RAMAṆA MAHARṢI

1

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Ramaṇa Maharṣi
(1870 — 1950)

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1

Birth, Parentage, and Early Life:

Venkaṭaramaṇa, better known subsequently as Ramaṇa Maharṣi, was the second son of a pleader named Sundaram Aiyar and his wife Alagammāl. He was born on December 30, 1879, in the village of Tiruchuzhi, in the district of Ramnad, South India. His father, Sundaram, had nothing extraordinary in his life. He had a very humble beginning in life and did not possess any special training, nor culture of any kind, either philosophical or spiritual or even religious. Whatever religion he professed was of the popular type; the rites he followed were the same as those followed by any simple-hearted Hindu householder of the locality, such as offering food to the deities installed in the house, visiting temples from time to time, and reading holy books like the *Purāṇas*, etc. However, there was a strain of asceticism in the family. It is said that, in consequence of a curse pronounced by a *sannyāsin* who had come begging for alms and had been turned away disappointed, one of the members of the family, in each generation, used to renounce the world and adopt *sannyāsa*. Sundaram's

elder brother, Venkaṭeśa Aiyar, had actually become a *sannyāsin*.[1]

Sundaram died in 1892, leaving behind him three sons, all minor at the time. Venkaṭaramaṇa was then twelve; his elder brother Nāgasvāmy fourteen, and the youngest brother, Nāgasundaram, only six.

Venkaṭaramaṇa's Education :

Venkaṭaramaṇa was not a promising boy; he cared more for games than for his own studies. He was of course sharp and intelligent by nature, but what could intelligence do towards building one's worldly career if studies were habitually neglected ? He inherited his father's devotion to the family deity of *Śiva*, though his worship was of a formal character and it did not awaken, to any appreciable extent, his emotional sensibilities. His education was very meagre. He received his early education at Tiruchuzhi and Dindigul, whence he was sent to Māclurāi for further studies. At Mādurāi he read up to the middle standard in the Scotts Middle School and then joined the American Mission High School. It is not known whether he went up to the highest class of the school, but there is no doubt that his studies did not extend beyond the High School. There was nothing uncommon in his early life, assuring or promising a bright career in the future. Apart from occasional fits

1. S.R., p. 13.

of somnambulism, the trait peculiar to him was his spells of absent-mindedness in the midst of work.[2]

His Self-introspective Mind :

However, there was no doubt that the habit of self-introspection was a characteristic of his mind; and it is worth mentioning that even in his early boyhood he was inclined to a mood of introversion and self-analysis. It was his habit to enquire into the elements of his own personality and try to puzzle out its true nature. "Who am I ?", "What am I ?", "Where am I ?" — these and other similar questions, questions which are subtle enough to baffle even the stoutest intellect — used to agitate his young mind.

It is said that even as a boy, Venkaṭaramaṇa was able to realise within himself, not once but frequently and in a most convincing manner, that he was in essence a distinct entity from his body — something which was eternal, deep, self-aware, blissful, and supra-material. This realisation came to him as an intuition, broken, uncontrolled, and spasmodic, but with a certainty which left no room for any doubt or misgiving.

His Devotion to Aruṇācalam :

Along with the clear intuition of the Self, he had a deep devotion which centred round the proper

2. S.R., p. 12.

name, 'Aruṇācalam.' The very name of 'Aruṇā-calam' used to awaken in his mind holy associations of a most exalted character. He did not even know, till the year 1895, what and where Aruṇācalam was; and yet the 'memory' of the place as a centre of all that was associated with Divine Perfection and Graciousness, which he was cherishing like a sacred treasure, haunted his mind. When his father died in 1892, 'Aruṇācalam' had come nearer to his soul, claiming all his love and devotion. In 1895, however, from a relative who had just returned to Mādurāi from a tour, he came to have a definite knowledge about the place, as being identical with the modern Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. This knowledge filled his heart at once with great joy and wonder.[3]

His Fear of Death and the Inwardness of Mind :

This incident happened when Venkaṭaramaṇa's career as a student in the High School was nearing its close. Prone to meditation and introspection, he found it difficult to put up any more with the drab routine of doing his lessons, which his teachers imposed on him. Neglect of studies continued, and the admonitions of elders and class-teachers produced little effect upon him. In the meantime, about the middle of July 1896, a sudden fear of death took hold of his mind and overwhelmed it to such an extent that he actually felt that he was dying. This

3. S.R., pp. 14-15.

mysterious experience turned the course of his life. The questions which pressed him for an immediate answer were based upon an intuition of the dichotomy of life, namely the nature of man, which seemed to suffer death, and the possibility of the survival of a certain element which was immortal. His mind was bent on discovering the truly imperishable element in the human personality, which he thought survived death, and on realising its distinction from the other associated elements which perished. It is clear that his habitual inwardness of mind became more prominent at this time, and his self-intuition, which was a special gift of his nature, became stronger and clearer.[4]

His Brother's Rebuke and His Resolution to Leave Home :

The crisis came in 1896, when he was writing out the answer to an exercise from Bain's Grammar, a work imposed on him as a penalty for carelessness and negligence. Being soon disgusted with the work, he left it half done and sat down in meditation. His elder brother, who was in the room and watched his movements, rebuked him, saying in effect that a man of his temperament should have nothing to do with school-life and studies. It was an innocent rebuke administered by an elder and intended to bring him round. But the mild rebuke gave rise to an undesired and quite opposite result. The remark touched Venkaṭaramaṇa's heart to the quick, and made him

4. S.R., pp. 19-22.

decide then and there both to sever all connections with the world and to proceed to Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, the centre of his boyish dreams, in search of the Divine Father, the object of his longings. He resolved to leave his family for good, with all its ties and associations, and live at a place not known to his relations. By this time the boy had somehow made himself acquainted with the contents of a religious treatise called *Periapurāṇam*, in which the lives of sixty-three Tamil saints were depicted. It seems that a keen desire to live the life of a recluse and devotee, following the lives of the great saints of whom he had read, possessed his heart.[5]

Venkaṭaramaṇa's Departure for Tiruvannāmalai :

We are told that Venkaṭaramaṇa took three rupees out of the money given to him to pay his brother's school fees, and he started for Aruṇācalam, leaving an unsigned note at home to the effect that he was going out seeking his Father by His command, and that as the aim was extraordinary nobody should feel grieved for his absence and waste money or take trouble to search him out. And by 'him', he meant only his body, which is ephemeral and least valuable. The boy knew that it was his body, rather than his Self, that his friends and relatives were familiar with under the name of Venkaṭaramaṇa. It is evident from Venkaṭaramaṇa's reference to himself in

5. S.R., pp. 24-26.

the third person in the above note that he had even in those tender years had come to realise the true nature of worldly existence, and had attained a high state of spiritual discrimination, all intuitively.[6]

On August 29, 1896, Venkaṭaramaṇa left for Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. The only thought that occupied his mind during the journey was upon his heavenly Father, to realise His holy presence; an insatiable thirst for God had seized his heart. The beautiful natural scenery through which he had to pass did not have any effect upon him, for he was not then in a mood to enjoy the beauty of nature. Being short of money, he could not travel by the railway for some distance, and he was compelled to walk ten miles on foot. Later on he had to sell, at a very low price, the pair of the gold earrings which he had on him, so as to be able to purchase a train ticket and reach his destination quickly. He found himself on the outskirts of the holy place on the fourth day of his journey.[7]

At the Temple of Aruṇācaleśvara :

The very sight of the temple of Aruṇācalam filled his heart with an unspeakable joy; and the first thing he did on reaching the place was to proceed straight to the inmost shrine of the temple, whereupon he

6. S.R., pp. 30-32.
7. S.R., pp. 33-40.

addressed the following words to the deity, the *Liṅgam* Aruṇācaleśvara, the object of his lifelong devotion :

> "O God, obedient to Thy call,
> Here have I come deserting all."[8]

The *Liṅgam* in front of the devotee was no longer a piece of stone, but was the source and centre of an ineffable Light, being the living embodiment of Divine Love and Protection.

Venkaṭaramaṇa Known as 'Brahma Svāmī' and His Sādhanā in the Caves :

Venkaṭaramaṇa spent the first six months in the temple precincts. He remained for a few weeks in the *Maṇṭapam,* the thousand-pillared hall constituting the outer precincts of the shrine, then in a small dark subterranean room called Pātālaliṅgam in the same hall, and later on, in the Gopuram called Subramaṇya Temple. Subsequently he moved from one cave to another in the different hills nearby, till November 1922, though Virūpākṣa was his chief residence. In due course he came to be known to the people of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai as a spiritually advanced ascetic, devoted to the pursuit of Supreme Knowledge. The name which they gave him was 'BRAHMA SVĀMĪ'. Having shaved off his beautiful locks of hair, he tore

8. S.R., p. 42.

his clothes into shreds; and wearing one of them as a cod-piece (*kaupin*), cast off the rest, along with the balance of money he had with him. He also removed the sacred thread from his body, and took a vow that henceforth he would never touch money.[9]

The first ten years of Venkaṭaramaṇa's life at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai were characterised by rigorous penances (*tapas*), including silence (*mauna*), non-attachment (*vairāgya*), and an almost continual immersion in deep *samādhi*.[10]

Venkaṭaramaṇa Tortured by People :

But life was not all pleasant for Venkaṭaramaṇa in the initial stage of his *sādhanā*. Like other mystics and seers, he had also his share of pain and agony. He was awfully troubled by the mischievous people of the place, who used to fling stones at him when he was in deep *samādhi*, during his stay in the precincts of the temple (*maṇṭapam*). In sheer contempt he was nicknamed 'Cinna Seshadri' (Seshadri, the young).

Venkaṭaramaṇa Attracts People ; His Disciples :

But the budding rose did not take a long time to attract popular admiration. Soon Venkaṭaramaṇa's

9. S.R., pp. 47-50.
10. U.S., p. 4.

fame as an ascetic spread in all directions; and he drew the attention of the pilgrims assembled on the occasion of the annual autumn festival round the nucleus of the temple, the *Kārtikai Festival* as it is called, and crowds began to flock to him. Even there were eager souls imploring him for their initiation. Uddandi Nayinar was the first among his disciples and Annamalai Tambiran the second.

His Expositions of Philosophical Treatises :

But what kind of initiation (*dīkṣā*) could the young devotee give, and how? As Brahma Svāmī, in his own case, he had not had any *guru*; it is said that he himself never gave any formal *dīkṣā* to anybody. In fact, he instructed and gave spiritual guidance and advice to many people who went to him, people who later on claimed to be his disciples. One Palani Svāmī, a scholar, unable to understand certain problems of Vedānta, brought several Tamil books on the subject, *Kaivalyanavanītam*, *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, etc., to Brahma Svāmī. The Svāmī, with his naturally clear intellect and retentive memory, aided by his illuminating experience, easily understood and explained them to the questioner. Moreover, through the catechism of the scholar, he not only removed the scholar's doubts but, in a way, also received his own education. It was in this way that he came to achieve a deep and extensive knowldge of those religious and philosophical books in languages other than his own, *e.g.*, in Saṁskrit, Telegu, and Malayalam.

Venkaṭaramaṇa, a Saint at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai :

It was in 1896 that Venkaṭaramaṇa had left Mādurā. Thereafter for a couple of years his relatives had failed to catch any trace of him. It was only in 1898 that they came to know, from a reliable source, that Venkaṭaramaṇa was a revered saint at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai.[11] His mother Alagammāl, accompanied by her eldest son, came to the place and did everything possible to induce him to return home. But the attempts were fruitless. Brahma Svāmī (for Venkaṭaramaṇa was now popularly known by this name), who was then observing silence, stood firm as a rock and declined to leave Tiruvaṇṇāmalai or his cherished vocation. Without breaking his silence he wrote on a piece of paper thus :

> "The Ordainer controls the fate of souls in accordance with their past deeds, their *prārabdha karma*. Whatever is destined not to happen will not happen,—try as hard as you may to do otherwise. Whatever is destined to happen will happen, come what may. This is absolutely certain. The best course for one, therefore, is to be silent."[12]

With a heavy heart, the disappointed Alagammāl descended from the hill, the abode of Brahma Svāmī, and left with her eldest son.

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11. S.R., p. 76.
12. S.R., p. 82.

Venkaṭaramaṇa as 'Ramaṇa Maharṣi' :

A particular feature of the Svāmī's way of dealing with his questioners, admirers, and disciples was striking. He would let them follow their course of life or thought for a while even if he thought these were wrong, even giving them advice on how to pursue their own thought or action. Only at a later stage would he seek to change their path and convert them to what he thought to be the best for them. This was particularly noticeable in regard to his way with one of his disciples named Gambhiram Seshier, a devout and sincere worshipper of Rāma, who was deeply interested in the eightfold path of *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*), including *prāṇāyāma*, etc. The Svāmī said that he never cared to practise breath-control (*prāṇāyāma*) as a stepping stone to *sādhanā*, and that he considered it as only one of the means of disciplining and controlling the mind for a while. Unlike many other *yogins* and mystics he attained *samādhi* without any preliminary breath-control. According to him, the 'Heart' was the centre of spiritual realisation. But as Seshier, one of his devotees, was anxious to know about *prāṇāyāma*, and wanted the Svāmī to explain it, the latter studied it and interpreted to the inquisitive devotee the eightfold path of *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*), with a view to enlighten the devotee and also spiritualise him to the required degree. He gave instructions to Seshier by writing on loose slips of papers, which were later on published in the form of a pamphlet called *A Catechism of Enquiry*.

The Svāmī never claimed to have made any critical study of Indian spiritual lore and thought, so that what he said purported to be his own views on the different schools. He never engaged himself in religious or other controversies. After Śivaprakāśam Pillai, to whom the Svāmī imparted instructions, an erudite scholar in Saṁskrit named Kāvykaṇṭha Gaṇapati Śāstrī came to visit Brahma Svāmī. Even the erudition in him did not bar Gaṇapati Śāstrī from falling under the spiritual spell of Brahma Svāmī. He was profoundly impressed by the divinisation already attained by the saint. To express his heartfelt reverence, the Śāstrī composed five stanzas of verse in praise of the Svāmī, and added that "Brahma Svāmī ensconced on the hill" should be addressed as "*Maharṣi.*" People felt great reverence for the Svāmī, and thenceforward Brahma Svāmī came to be known as 'RAMANA MAHARṢI.' Gaṇapati Śāstrī did not part company with Ramaṇa and stayed on there serving him. The Maharṣi who was, in his turn, deeply impressed by Śāstrī's learning, sincerity, and devotion, began to learn Saṁskrit under Gaṇapati's supervision and commenced the study of the holy books in Saṁskrit, like Śaṅkara's *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, along with its translation in Tamil.[13]

Maharṣi's Works :

The Maharṣi became acquainted with many religious works in Tamil and a few in Saṁskrit, and obtained

13. S.R., pp. 89-94.

mastery of an important corpus of spiritual literature. In this process, too, he gained a thorough grounding in his mother tongue, Tamil. The original Tamil poems, all suffused with the deep spiritualism of his heart, *e.g.*, *Aruṇāchala-stotra*, *Upadeśa-sāram* or *Undiyar* and *Ulladu Nārapadu*, which Ramaṇa Maharṣi composed, are a glowing testimony to his ability to use the language just as a master flute player uses his flute. These poems were subsequently translated by the devoted Gaṇapati into Saṁskrit under the captions *Sat-darśana*, etc. The poems, mostly hymnical and epistolary, are distinguished alike by literary grace, intense devotion, and philosophic thought. Ramaṇa also rendered some well known standard Saṁskrit works on spiritual subjects into Tamil prose and verse, viz., Śaṅkara's *Vivekacūḍamaṇi*, part of *Devīkalottaram*, and Śaṅkara's *Dakṣiṇāmūrti-stotra*, etc. His replies to the queries and problems posed by his disciples are embodied in *Ramaṇa Gītā*, and he rendered his own *Upadeśa Undiyar* into Saṁskrit, Malayalam, and Telegu verses.

Ramaṇa Faced Enemies :

With the spread of Ramaṇa's fame, a large number of people came to him with the desire to see him and to have the benefit of spiritual instructions from him. Consequently there was a phenomenal increase in the number of his admirers. This produced envy in the hearts of some *sādhus* of the place. The envy came to the fore when Ramaṇa Maharṣi broke his

silence and began to answer the questions put to him by the congregation of people. The *sādhus* tried to browbeat him into submission, and resorted to other devices to put an end to his popularity. But the Maharṣi was absolutely above all this meanness. His serenity and the dedication to his spiritual ends could not be affected in the least. Sometimes against this concerted hostility he was very bold indeed. The storm finally blew over.

Ramaṇa's Dutifulness towards His Mother :

Nāgasvāmy, Ramaṇa's elder brother, died soon after he returned from Tiruvaṇṇāmalai in 1900. Nāgasundaram, his youngest brother, lost his wife and came to Ramaṇa Maharṣi, surrendered to him, and was later serving him as the secretary of the *āśrama*, under the new name of Nirañjanānanda. His mother Alagammāl, while on her way to pilgrimage, stopped several times at the *āśrama*. Once she fell ill when the Maharṣi was at the Virūpākṣa cave, where she had come to see her son. He served and attended her with exemplary love, patience, and diligence. Later, in 1916, she too came there and became a permanent resident of the *āśrama*. She passed away in 1922 after a prolonged illness. The bereavement, the people saw, could have no depressing effect on the Maharṣi. He had already risen to that high spiritual stage where the heart and the mind were always steady. His enlightened soul perfected in the mastery of the spiritual wisdom (*sthita-prajña*), was completely liberated from all earthly involvements.

The Three Liṅgams at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai :

Seṣadri Svāmī, one of the Maharṣi's sincere friends, fellow-spiritual travellers, and admirers, used to tell his disciples that there were three *liṅgams* or phallic emblems of God at the place where the Maharṣi lived, viz., (*a*) *Jyotirliṅgam*, known to all, (*b*) Ramaṇa Maharṣi, and (*c*) his own self. What did this equation of the deity, installed at the shrine, with two human beings indicate? Here is the core of the esoteric knowledge, according to which man in his pursuit of Self-realisation is able to reach a state of identity with *Para Brahman*, a state in which there is no physical dissolution, though life becomes exclusively spiritual — a state of godliness in this existence. It was this rare and most yearned-for state which the two seers had reached.

Ramaṇa Maharṣi, a Living Embodiment of Divine Realisation :

Ramaṇa Maharṣi was a living embodiment of Divine Realisation, of perfect equanimity, of universal love, of an attitude of beaming kindness to all creatures, both sentient and insentient. He had realised his Self; and having discovered it in all creation, had established himself in a Self-conscious Unity with the entire world. He had lived at the shrine since the early age of seventeen, till his last days. Once a seeker, and then a realised man, he had never turned

away from the holy soil of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. He had thus become the God-appointed spirit and genius of the place, and made it great by his association. No wonder that since then, the place has become the focal point of devout pilgrimage. He gave a soothing balm to many and helped open up spiritual vision for thousands of souls. After his death, his memory and the place where he lived are the beacon lights to guide the path of many a spiritually benighted soul.

His Passing Away :

The death of the mortal frame of this great seer and *Jīvanmukta* took place on April 4, 1950 at the ripe age of seventy-one. But his spiritual essence enjoys deathless glory.

> Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
> Like seasoned timber, never gives;
> But though the whole world turn to coal,
> Then chiefly lives.

2

Maharṣi's Teachings, Its Sources :

The mystical doctrines of the Maharṣi, on which we propose to dwell at some length now, are mostly embodied in the little booklets written either by him, or embodying his conversations, which took place

from time to time with his devotees (*bhaktas*) and admirers. Of his own works, all translations from the original Tamil into Saṁskrit, *Sad-vidyā* (in Tamil, *Ulladu Nārapadu,* in forty verses), its supplement (containing sixteen verses composed by him and a few by others), and *Upadeṣa-sāram* (in Tamil, *Undiyar,* in thirty verses) are the most important. Besides these, we have his instructions (written down by himself in 1941) for his disciple Gambhiram Seshier and for other disciples and admirers. Some of these have been collected and published under various names, and are also available in translations.

The mysticism, which the Maharṣi's life and instructions reveal, is of a most direct, straightforward, and practical nature; and there is no doubt that the instructions come straight from his heart and are fused with the living current of his own high spiritual realisations.

Ramaṇa on Self-realisation and Its Different Approaches :

Self-realisation is the central idea on which the entire philosophy of the Maharṣi's mystic life rests.[14] He holds, in common with the other great saints of the past and the present, that the true aim of human life is to realise the Self; and that there is no other way to obtain perfect Peace, the heavenly Peace here

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14. C.E., pp. 8. 11.

on earth. This realisation, he says, is not an intellectual act but a matter of direct intuition. The Self is the Supreme Reality; and though it is always and everywhere present, its existence is not distinctly perceived, owing to the veil cast over it by the mind, which harbours the thoughts, associations, and tendencies born of our total involvement in the world of desires and passions. The mind can be purged, and all its attendants eliminated through *samādhi* and *jñāna*. If this is achieved, the blissful Reality which is self-luminous, though till now clouded in ignorance, reveals itself in its naked grandeur to the aspiring soul. It has been pointed out by our ancient seers and holy books—and to this we have already referred earlier — that there is absolutely no difference between the human self and the Divine Self or the Absolute. Hence the realisation of the Self as understood by the Maharṣi is synonymous with the vision of God and intuition of the Absolute.

There are different methods of approaching the Self and realising one's unity with it. Though the methods differ, none of them exclusively lends itself to an independent practice; for in each method, elements of the others are found synthesised and harmonised. The Maharṣi ponits out, however, that in spite of the apparent differences, all the methods aim at the adoption of the common formula of seeking and finding out the source and reaching the heart of the matter. The usually recognised methods are the paths of *karma, bhakti, yoga*, and *jñāna*.

Ramaṇa on Karma and Its Triple Nature :

The path of *karma* consists of worship (*pūjā*)—either with the body (*kāya*), or with the vocal organ (*vākya*), or with the mind (*manas*). In the first case, external activities of a ceremonial nature are enjoined. The second is an advance on the first, and consists of the devoted and concentrated repetition of the Holy Name (*japa*), or reading aloud the devotional hymns (*stotras*) in praise of the object of worship. The third or the highest act of worship (*pūjā*) is known as meditation (*dhyāna*).[15] This classification, as done by the Maharṣi, is based on the principle of progressive and increasing inwardness, which is the object of all *sādhanā*. Meditation as a mental action is thus called the highest form of *karma*, leading gradually to concentration and absorption.

Ramaṇa on Samādhi and Its Varieties :

Samādhi is a state in which the mind disappears, being either suspended temporarily in its activities, or rendered inactive and unfruitful permanently. According to the Maharṣi, the varieties of *Samādhi* are described as follows :

(1) *Śuṣka Samādhi* :

First of all, there is what may be called in the language of the specialised literature on the

15. U.S., pp. 4-7.

subject, *śuṣka samādhi*, or the popular trance, which is induced at will by various means, physical, psychical, or spiritual. In this condition the mind and the senses are held in abeyance or stupefied; but there is no realisation of the Self or even a possibility of it. Naturally, this type of *samādhi* is not assigned a high place in the scheme of spiritual discipline; but even as it is, it has a value of its own, as a preliminary step in the direction of the higher *samādhi* entitled *savikalpa*.

(2) *Savikalpa Samādhi* :

It is in the *savikalpa samādhi* that the stupefaction of the mind is replaced by its absorption. Absorption is certainly a higher state, but its relative value depends on the quality of the object in which absorption takes place. The best type of absorption is absorption in the personality of one's constantly-pursued Personal God (*iṣṭa-devatā*), effected more or less in a spontaneous manner. This condition represents a state of sublimated Love, and deserves to be placed in the highest grade of *savikalpa samādhi*.

But this state, though pure, is certainly not the purest, inasmuch as it is not yet free from the action and effect of the distracting forces of diverse nature known as *vikalpas*. The *vikalpas* indeed are the conceptual elements in our knowledge, and assert themselves in the guise of verbal association. The next step, therefore, is meant to conquer the *vikalpas* and attain a state of silent

consciousness. Every *vikalpa* involves, in its functioning, a process of mental differentiation — a process which the mind unconsiously undergoes when it perceives an object other than itself. It can be conquered only when the mind or the ego-sense is completely submerged and lost in the object of one's worship or adoration.

(3) *Nirvikalpa Samādhi*; *Kevala Nirvikalpa Samādhi* :

The annihilation of the impure mind, as referred to above, and absorption of *jīva* in the Personal God through intense devotion, lead on to an infinite mass of undifferentiated consciousness, which is really indescribable. In this state, the Self becomes identified with the Personal God, and then passes into Impersonal *Brahman* above the range of thought. As a matter of fact, in the highest state of *nirvikalpa*, no consciousness worthy of the name is left, but in the earlier state, the vision of Unity asserts itself in all its glory, in which differences of any kind are conspicuous by their absence. So long as the body endures, only faint glimpses of the higher *nirvikalpa* condition appear, followed by a return to the earlier or preliminary state of *samādhi*. These glimpses, entirely free from thoughts and attributes, are known as *kevala nirvikalpa* — a state of unalloyed Bliss (*ānanda*), which bears a close resemblance to the dreamless condition. This is the highest *samādhi* a *yogin* can possibly realise through the practice of *yoga*. The return to the earlier condition, and the incapacity of the *yogin* to abide in the perfect state of

realisation, are due to the continuance of the distracting forces (*vāsanās*).

(4) *Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samādhi* :

But when the *vāsanās* are destroyed, the higher type of *nirvikalpa* called *sahaja nirvikalpa samādhi* takes place, which is, according to Maharṣi Ramaṇa, the attainment of perfect freedom and peace (*sahaja-avasthā*). The Self-realisation that was temporary and attained only as a faint glimpse in the relatively inferior *kevala* condition, becomes stable in this condition. The state of *sahaja* which is perfect peace, and is even beyond the highest Bliss (*ānandātīta*) experienced during the *kevala nirvikalpa*, is, in the esoteric parlance, known as *tanmaya-avasthā* or *tādātmya-avasthā*. This is the state of perfect Self-realisation, which is of a permanent kind, and denotes eternal freedom from the play of *vāsanās*. This is the ideal of the *jñānin*, an ideal which the Maharṣi recommends, from the experiences gained in his personal life, through examples and precepts.

Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samādhi as Jīvanmukti :

The *sahaja nirvikalpa samādhi* is a state of liberation in the body. It is *jīvanmukti* proper and may be likened to wide watchfulness, as distinguished from the dreamless sleep referred to above. It is a wonderful condition of perfect egolessness, in which the *yogin*, or rather the *jñānin*, may be described as one

who is always free from all activities, even in the midst of incessant action.

Two States of Nirvikalpa Samādhi; Kevala and Sahaja Distinguished :

In the aforesaid *kevala* state, the mind is absorbed in the Light of the Self, and there is no darkness of ignorance, as in the state of dreamless sleep. There is a revival of normal consciousness in it, because the mind, in the form of *vāsanās*, continues to exist, though it may have sunk for a while beneath the surface. Unless and until the Supreme Knowledge (*mahājñāna*) is attained, the distraction of the mind is not altogether out of question. The glimpse of Self-knowledge which the *yogin* in this condition is able to catch, is really a continuation of the state of *vijñāna*; or, in other words, the state of one who has reached the outer periphery of Knowledge (*jñāna*), in which the earlier *savikalpa samādhi* ends. The mind, which was lost in ignorance during the state of dreamless sleep (*suṣupti*), shakes off its stupor, and releases itself from the clutches of ignorance at the advent of *vijñāna*. As such it is no longer possible for the mind to lapse into the earlier condition. The Light of the Self, revealing itself in the state of *vijñāna*, forms the background in which the mind of the *yogin* in the *kevala nirvikalpa* state rests temporarily. This Light, as has already been said above, is not absolutely pure, inasmuch as it contains hidden within itself the germs of re-emergence, of the

darkness in the shape of *vāsanās* that are the hyper-subtle traces and tendencies of the impure mind. Only when the Light becomes brighter, and the flame of knowledge all-consuming, are these tendencies completely destroyed; and the Light of the Self becomes absolutely and unalterably pure. Once in this condition, the possibility of a return to the ordinary level of consciousness (*vyutthāna*) disappears altogether. In this way, thus, the lower *nirvikalpa* or the *kevala* state evolves imperceptibly into the higher state of *sahaja,* also called *jīvanmukti*. It is thus clear that, though the lower *nirvikalpa,* viz., of the *kevala* type, is attainable through such efforts or discipline as breath-control or other forms of *yoga*, the higher condition, viz., of the *sahaja* type, cannot be realised except through the dawning of Supreme Knowledge, dependent entirely upon God's Grace. This is the Gnosis (*mahājñāna*) to which reference has been made earlier, the attainment of which must be the *summum bonum* of human life, and on which the Maharṣi lays the greatest emphasis.

Ramaṇa on Individuality in the State of Jīvanmukti :

It has been observed that in the highest state of true illumination, *i.e.*, with the dawn of Supreme Gnosis, the ego ceases to exist. The existence or non-existence of *vāsanās* is the criterion which determines whether the *nirvikalpa* condition realised is *kevala* or *sahaja*. The latter condition, which is synonymous with *jīvanmukti*, is the purest state of the

Self, and is free from all kinds of passions and mental affections, as we have already mentioned in the preceding paragraphs. The Maharṣi points out that, though the ego disappears, the personality is not dissolved, and the individuality of the free and serene ego-less soul, the *jīvanmukta*, persists. It goes without saying that now it is the pure individuality pertaining to the Self which rules supreme, after the annihilation of *jīva*, which is nothing but the impure mind. The Maharṣi's *Sad-darśana* tells us that on the disappearance of the apparent self or the ego, brought about by the advent of Knowledge, the true '*I*', the pure Self, appears on the surface in one or two alternate ways :

> "Either by using the regenerate ego as an instrument or by transforming it into a true reflection so as to make its presence felt on the surface, the effect of which is an experience, a feeling in the ego-self that it is one with its deeper and real Self and that it is this deeper being that has assumed the form of the apparent self in the phenomenal existence."[16]

In this condition the '*I*' which reveals itself is really the frequent and pure flash of the Supreme '*I*'—*śuddha ahambhāva sphūrti*. This '*I*' is not the ego (*ahaṁkāra*) which is shattered beyond any change of revival by the oncoming incessant waves of the Supreme Dyanamism that constitute the Supreme

16. S.D. Bhāṣya., p. 111.

and Perfect Self. The ringing notes of the Maharṣi's verse announce :

athāhamanyatsphurati prakṛṣṭam.
nāhaṅkṛtistatparameva pūrṇam ..[17]

Then flashes forth another 'I',
Not the ego that, but the Self, Supreme, Perfect.[18]

Deification ; the Jīvanmukta and the Siddhis :

The state described above is thus, in all reality, the eternal self-consciousness of the Self, which flashes and illumines frequently and spontaneously by virtue of its inherent and true nature. It is on account of this that the liberated man is able to retain his true individuality. This luminous and serene self-awareness of a *jīvanmukta* should therefore be understood as a glorious assertion of what may be called Pure Being (*śuddha sattva*), which is the everlasting attribute of the pure and deified Self.

The Maharṣi, through his life and experience, tested and verified the truth of the statement made by Sureśvarācārya, an earlier *yogic* scholar and seer, in his *Dakṣiṇāmūrti-vārttika*, that a true gnostic is also a Self-realised soul (*siddha*) of the highest order. The Ācārya says :

aiśvaryamīśvaratvaṁ hi tasya nāsti pṛthaksthitiḥ.
puruṣe dhāvamānepi chāyā tamanudhāvati ..

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17. S.D.Verse. 22.
18. S.D.Bhāṣya, p. 110.

anantaśaktiraiśvaryaṁ niṣyandāścāṇimādayaḥ.
svasyeśvaratve saṁsiddhe sidhyanti svayameva hi ..[19]

What is Divinity but these excellences, for it has no other base. The shadow must follow man even when he is running. So is the Power Illimitable of which the reflections are the excellences and the acquisition of *aṇimā* and the other divine powers. These latter are nothing but the drops percolating from the Supreme Reservoir. It follows thus that one who has realised the Divine Power within him is also blessed with these excellences in a natural process.

This shows that in the opinion of Sureśvara, the Self (*ātman*) is God (*Īśvara*). All the divine attributes and potentialities are, therefore, inherent in the Self. The Self possesses all these powers as a matter of right, but due to the ignorance of its true nature which is divine, the attributes lie hidden within it and are as good as non-existent. But as soon as the light of true knowledge reveals the Self, there is a great spiritual rebirth of man. All these godly powers, dormant in him so far, manifest themselves and suffuse his whole being. The human self thus realises the true Self.

The Maharṣi on Jīvanmukta and Two Kinds of Siddhis :

The Maharṣi points out that there are two kinds of the highest spiritual powers (*siddhi*). Some of

19. X. 4-5.

these powers, forming a category by themselves, are extrinsic in character, and are acquired in the midst of ignorance and egoistic life, either through self-effort or as a gift from outside. The others, forming the second category, are those which are intrinsic and constitute the very essence of the Self. The latter powers (*siddhi*) are the true and real powers of the Self, the powers that are manifested as a matter of course, when Self-knowledge, in removing the veil of ignorance, reveals the Self in its infinite splendour and plenitude of powers. These powers, which are natural to and inherent in the Self, accrue to a Self-realised soul (*jīvanmukta*) as a result of the cleansing process which has made him free from the taints and traces of ignorance. The usual *yogic* powers, because of their inability to crush the ego permanently, are rightly considered as hindrances on the path of Self-realisation. But the powers of a *mahāyogin* or a *mahājñānin*, *i.e.*, one in whom the knowledge of Self has fully dawned and what the *jīvanmukta* truly is, are essentially identical with those of the Self, and are totally and intensely auspicious in nature. These powers reveal rather than conceal the real character of the Self. It is in this light that a truly liberated being is called a *siddhapuruṣa*. The frequent flash of self-awareness, to which we have referred, is the source of every power (*siddhi*) which a *jīvanmukta* claims as his own. The Maharṣi says that the immediate effect of the gradual heightening of a *jīvanmukta*'s power, consequent upon his having attained the purest state of Self-knowledge before his inner vision (*ātmasphūrti*), is that he becomes in-

tangible and invisible to the world. It is to this state that the *Ramaṇa Gītā* refers in the following lines :

jīvanmuktasya kālena tapasaḥ paripākataḥ .
sparśobhāvo'pi siddhsyādrūpe satyapi kutracit ..
bhūyaśca paripākena rūpābhāvo'pi sidhyati .
kevalaṁ cinmayo bhūtvā sa siddho vihariṣyati ..[20]

A *jīvanmukta* through the progress of his *tapasyā* is endowed with the power of remaining intangible even though he retains his bodily form. With further progress of *tapasyā* comes the superior blessing of freedom from the body itself. Then it is that the *siddha-puruṣa* exists as the pure consciousness, on the astral plane of Heavenly Bliss. These powers, enjoyed by the *jīvanmukta*, thus develop themselves gradually in the course of time (*kalena*), through the maturing of *tapas* (*tapasaḥ paripākataḥ*) of consciousness-force (*cit-śakti*), which has become manifest in the liberated self (*jīvanmukta*).

Jīvanmukta and His Form :

This is perfectly in keeping with the Maharṣi's attitude of opposition to the three conceptions of the release from worldliness (*mukti*) recognised in the Indian philosophical schools. The concept of *mukti* has all along been a moot point of debate among the theologīans, philosophers, and saints. It is well known

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20. R.G.XIV. pp. 9-10.

that saints, like Lokanāth Brahmacārīn of Bādarī,[21] hold the view that the liberated soul is formless and free from embodiment. There are others, like Jaiminī, who maintain an opposite view, saying that the soul in release has a body of its own. These contradictory views are attempted to be reconciled by Bādarāyaṇa, who is of the opinion that both the above views are equally true, inasmuch as the soul may assume a form or dispense with it at its own will. In the midst of these controversies, Ramaṇa Maharṣi follows an original line in consonance with the uniqueness of his own spiritual experiences and attainments. He says that none of the three conceptions represents truly the character of a liberated soul, for true liberation is nothing but a destruction of the ego-sense which, as a matter of fact, discriminates between one conception of *mukti* and another. The three conceptions noted above and held by three competent authorities, represent only the different states of development pertaining to a *jīvanmukta*, when he is able to assume or dispense with a form at will or become merely a centre of consciousness at one with the Supreme Reality.

Lower Siddhis Not Essential to Jīvanmukti :

It has been observed that powers (*siddhis*) manifest themselves spontaneously in *jīvanmukti*. They are

21. A *yogin* possessing extraordinary supernatural powers, living from 1730-1890 A.D. Reference to him is made in Volume III of this book.

produced from the spiritual intensity and concentration (*tapas*) of the *jñānin*. But in some cases there may be no manifestation of these powers, owing to the countereffect of certain hindrances and constitutional defects of the physical or mental equipment. But even when the endowment of these powers is not obtained, the *jīvanmukta* does not feel perturbed at all, as he has got the highest *siddhi* in the form of Self-knowldege. These powers are no criteria of true knowledge, which consists in pure and steady vision (*sama-darśana*). One is reminded in this context of the statement of Vyāsa, in his commentary on the *Yoga-sūtra*. Vyāsa says :

> *etasyāmavasthāyāṁ kaivalyaṁ bhavatīśvarasyānīśvarasya vā vivekajajñānabhāgina itarasya vā .. na hi dagdha-kleśabījasya jñāne punarapekṣā kācidasti, sattvaśuddhi-dvāreṇaitatsamādhijamaiśvaryañca jñānoñcopakrāntam .. paramārthatastu jñānādadarśanaṁ nivarttate .. tasminni-vṛtte na santyuttare kleśāḥ .. kleśabhāvātkarmavipā-kābhāvaḥ caritādhikārāścaitasyāmavasthāyāṁ guṇā na puruṣasya punardṛśyatvenopatiṣṭhante tatpuruṣasya kai-valyaṁ, tadā puruṣaḥ svarūpamātrajyotirmalaḥ kevalī bhavati ..*[22]

In this state it matters not whether omnipotence has been gained or not, or whether there has been the dawning of discriminative knowledge; but there is in this state (when pure intellect is above the stain of all *rajas* and *tamas*) the longed-for isolation (*kaivalya*). The seeds of pain having been made

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22. *Yoga-sutra*, III. 55.

sterile, there cannot be any birth of knowledge from them. Already it has been stated that manifold powers and knowledge are the fruits of concentration. When discriminative discernment has uprooted the causes of nescience and the resultant misery, no further misery will come. Afflictive actions being ended, their fruits cannot trouble any more. The *puruṣa* is free from all contact with the *guṇas* that are already satiated and rendered innocuous. It is this state which is known as the *kaivalya* of the *puruṣa*. Free from the stain and infection of all earthly matter, the *puruṣa* then shines in its original purity and splendour.

Thus there is nothing but truth in the Maharṣi's ideal that these powers being in no way inalienably linked with self-knowledge, self-realisation should not be held to be identical with this knowledge. These powers, thus, great though they be, are inferior to self-knowledge. What the Maharṣi says in regard to these lower powers (*siddhis*) corresponds to the classical notion of the *Yoga* school which does not look upon the powers as an essential accompaniment of the Supreme Illumination. It is thus clear that a *jīvanmukta* may have all the powers (*siddhi*) or he may have none. The disappearance of the afflictions (*kleśas*) or the distracting forces in the form of desires and cravings (*vāsanās*), as the Maharṣi says, which follows on the rise of the true and perfect Knowledge, is the only pre-condition of *jīvanmukti*. The emergence or non-emergence of the powers (*siddhi*), which depends on the composition

of the inner personality of the *yogin* concerned, does not make any basic difference.

Jīvanmukta and Prārabdha Karma :

Jīvanmukti, as has been shown above, is the purest condition of the Self consistent with its continued association with the body. The dawn of Divine Illumination implies the cessation of *karma*, though the elements of the physical being, which have been ushered in under the pressure of *prārabdha*, continue to exist. The accumulated (*sañcita*) *karma* is destroyed or more correctly brought under a permanent check and is never allowed to fructify. The present *karma* (*kriyamāṇa*) which is current cannot attach itself as a load any more because there is no base for it to operate upon, the mind or impure ego having already disappeared. However, that portion of the accumulated *karma* which has begun to fructify (*prārabdha*), still persists.

The Maharṣi, in common with the other well-known exponents of the theory of *karma*, regards the *prārabdha* as a force which cannot be destroyed except through the experience of its fruits (*phala-bhoga*). But in exceptional cases it is possible, the Maharṣi hastens to add, to rise above this force. He points out that the individual ego which is affected by the *prārabdha* being weakened on realisation of its true nature, the *prārabdha* which cannot exist independently of the ego, ceases to exist. In other words, the *prārabdha* also vanishes with the

disappearance of the ego-sense.[23] It appears, therefore, that in the case of a person in the state of *kevala nirvikalpa samādhi*, the *prārabdha* is still a force to reckon with and the rule concerning the inevitability holds good. But in the case of a person in the higher *sahaja* state, *i.e.*, one who has achieved true *jīvanmukti*, no such rule is applicable at all.

But the question remains even in the case of the *jīvanmukta* : what makes the body continue to function ? The *jīvanmukta* is above *karma* and is absolutely free from impure *vāsanās*, the props on which the body functions. The continuance of his body has, therefore, to be otherwise accounted for. The Maharṣi's outlook on Reality would seem to suggest that the body of a *jīvanmukta* is no longer the same body as he possessed in his already overcome state of ignorance and bondage. The body he bears in the elevated state is the one that has been transformed in the process. The extent of this transformation depends on the degree of *tapas* evolved in him after the *jīvanmukti* has been effected. The pure Light of the Self which reveals itself as pure Mind or pure 'I' on the attainment of Supreme Knowledge is a creative power which continues to build up ceaselessly a fresh and pure organism capable of holding and revealing the power of pure consciousness proportionately to the extent to which it has been realised. As a matter of fact, it is, as it has already been pointed out, identical with Supreme Realisation (*siddhi*).

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23. C.I., p. 36.

Assuming all this, the question which still lurks is: is it an immortal body such as that of a *siddha* who has escaped death under the discipline of the *siddha-mārga*, or a body which is pure and illumined, though still material and not above the limitation of mutable matter ? In other words, is such a body free from death in the absolute sense or only in the relative sense ? In the history of mysticism we come across doctrines in support of both the positions. What we know is that while a belief in physical immortality is found among the *siddhas* of one school, there are *siddhas* of another type who accept death as a matter of personal choice (*icchā-mṛtyu*). Unfortunately, the Maharṣi's view is not clear on this point. So far as we know, he has said nothing in favour of the former view and he would not accept the latter, as it involves the question of choice (*icchā*), which must have disappeared with the disappearance of the ego. It seems more likely that the pure mind, in which he believes, may be identified with pure *vāsanās*. But even on this presumption it is doubtful whether even pure *vāsanās* would be justified in their existence in a state of *jīvanmukti* as understood by the Maharṣi.

The Heart, the True Centre of Spiritual Experience; Hṛdaya-vidyā :

A student of Ramaṇa literature cannot fail to be struck with the great importance which the Maharṣi attaches to the *Heart* in the scheme of his spiritual

discipline, to which we have already referred earlier.[24] The centre of spiritual experience is considered by some experts in the esoteric science to be the place between the two eyebrows, but others locate it in the heart. The Maharṣi speaks generally of the *Heart* as the seat of consciousness and as identical with the Self. The *Heart* to him is the core of one's being and the true centre of spiritual experience. But lest there should be any confusion, it must be pointed out that the *Heart* meant by the Maharṣi is absolutely different from the physical organ known under the name. The real *Heart*, says the Maharṣi, like pure consciousness, is beyond time and place and is indivisible. Evidently this *Heart* cannot belong to the body which is a projection of the mind, and the mind in its turn is but a faint reflection of the *Heart* itself. But so long as a man remains in the body, reference to the heart in terms of the physical organism becomes necessary, for, from the standpoint of human physiology, the seat of the heart is in the physical body. It is a well-known fact that pure consciousness beyond mind and body can be experienced with or without bodily awareness. In the latter case, the question of the position of the physical heart does not arise at all, for it is a state in which the physical consciousness as such does not exist. But in the other case, it has to be remembered that bodily awareness which is necessarily narrower and is atomic in character is a reflection, howsoever vague it may be, of pure consciousness, which is

24. M.G., II. p. 43.

infinite and by which it is sustained. Body-consciousness thus undergoes the process of revolutionary transformation; it begins to manifest itself as a ray of absolute consciousness unlimited by body and mind. It is in this sense only that a true *jñānin* is aware of his body, just as contrarily in the bodiless experience of pure consciousness, the existence of the body is not at all felt. The possibility of the localisation of pure experience within the limits of the body can only be explained on the basis of a feeling of recollection during bodily awareness.

The Maharṣi says that the position of the *Heart* in relation to one's identity is determined in each case by intuition. In brief, one may identify this position with the right side of the chest. The difference between the two eyebrows (*bhrū-madhya*) and the heart (*hṛdaya*), from the standpoint of a practical *yogin,* lies in this, that while the former centre is a more appropriate place for contemplation (*bhāvanā*), the latter is the only place suitable for true realisation (*anubhava*), in which one's identification with the Self is complete, individuality lost, and mind transcended. In this state of self-conscious identity, it is not possible for a subject to experience the centre concerned as distinct from the all-absorbing experience gained. The ultimate source of consciousness being the Self (*ātman*), its centre cannot but be in the heart — it cannot be either between the two eyebrows or at any place above the head. Of course, it is not necessary that the centre of experience and the seat of the Self should be identical. The centre, for instance, may be any of the psycho-spiritual centres (*cakra*) on which

the mind is concentrated, as the *yoga* school would say and to which copious references have been made in the chapter on Vijayakṛṣṇa Gosvāmin; but there is no reason why the *cakra* should be assumed as identical with the seat of the Self. During contemplation (*bhāvanā*) the subject and the object remain separate, while the object may be any centre within the limits of the body. In this case the centre is only a position of convenience which facilitates the control of attention. But in true realisation (*anubhava*), the subject and the object become unified when one merges in the Self. This by itself is the *Heart* : the gleaming stage inside us on which this great spiritual drama is enacted.

From the preceding paragraphs it is clear that during meditation or even during contemplation, the object remains distinct from the subject; but with the gradual intensity of concentration, this distinctness begins to fade away and the object is progressively obliterated, until in the end the object and the subject become one and the same. This great and Supreme Realisation itself is of the *Heart* (*hṛdaya-vidyā*). He even accepts the position of those others who would affirm that the seat is the bridge between the two eyebrows. But he insists that concentration on the middle of the two eyebrows should be accompanied by a devoted mental reiteration of the *mantra* (*japa*), as otherwise one is likely to lose one's hold on this centre. The continued practice of this composite *sādhanā* leads to the identification of the three : *nāma*, *mantra*, or *ātman*, with the centres selected for meditation (*dhyāna*). The end of the road comes in the

realisation of pure consciousness. In the opinion of the Maharṣi, irrespective of the view concerning the seat of the Self (either *sahasrāra* or *hṛdaya*), it is better for the aspirant on the path of spiritual enquiry to take up the clues of '*I*'-ness (*asmitā*). It is not difficult for one who has discipline, devotion, and faith to follow it up to its source. The clues are there both in our outer and inner being, provided we have the eye to catch them. This course of pursuit goes by the name of the path of Self-enquiry (*ātma-vicāra*), which leads to the *Heart* or Self, the source of '*I*'-ness (*asmitā*).

The Maharṣi on Hṛdaya and the Yogins' Anāhata-cakra :

The Maharṣi's conception of the *Heart* (*hṛdaya*) as it is now clear, does not exactly correspond to the *yogic* conception of its counterpart. The *yogic* centres including the *anāhata-cakra,* usually identified with the heart, are all links in the chain of our nervous system, representing different steps, manifesting different kinds of powers or knowledge and leading to the *sahasrāra,* the region just above the head, in which the Supreme Power (*Parā Śakti*) is said to be located. But the Self which stands behind the entire movement of Power (*Śakti*) is not revealed in the head but supports it from the heart. There can be no manifestation of Power (*Śakti*) except from the Self, for it is the Self that reveals itself in the form of *Śakti.* In the highest *samādhi*, the *yogin* gets regular support, sustenance, and lead from the Self in the *Heart,* though he may or

may not be aware of the fact. But if he is aware of the *Heart*, he knows that all his states refer to this, the greatest seat of the Self in him, and that the same spirit is present throughout. In the *Tāntrika* literature the heart and the *sahasrāra* are known respectively as the solar region (*sūrya-maṇḍala*) and the lunar region, (*candra-maṇḍala*) showing that while the former is the centre of the Self (*ātman*), the latter is the centre of the Power (*Śakti*).[25]

The Maharṣi on Self-enquiry and Its Distinction from Meditation :

Control and the final liquidation of the mind, without which there can be no self-realisation, necessitates an actual enquiry concerning one's Self, through the question or questions : '*Who am I* ?' or '*Whence am I* ?'. It is not necessary to study the scriptures to be able to make the enquiry regarding the Self. What is really needed is to keep the mind always turned within and to abide in the Self. Meditation (*dhyāna*) differs from enquiry (*vicāra*) in so far as the former is contemplation of the Self (*ātman*) as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (*Sat-Cit-Ānanda*).

The method of Self-enquiry (*ātma-vicāra*) is really a method of self-analysis. The ego is fully exposed to its unreality when an investigation into its true nature is made. Later the phenomenal existence of the ego is transcended when it dives into the source

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25. *Sad-Darśana — Talks with Maharṣi*, pp. XXVIII to XXIX.

from which it originates; this is at the same time its annihilation and its return home. The ego, thus, has the seeds in it, which when properly cultured and nourished, lead to consummate fruition of Self-realisation. To explain this novel point, the Maharṣi explains the nature of the ego. The ego, he says, manifests itself in diverse forms with each of which its primary function is associated. In consequence of this, the ego identifies itself with each of these forms or bodies. In the midst of all these diverse forms, the ego has one primary and basic form which underlies all other forms of it, and which for want of a better expression may be described as '*I-am-ness*' (*asmitā*).

The intrinsic and fundamental quality and virtue of the ego (*ahaṁvṛtti*) is the primary datum of one's experience, its pith and substance; and it is no casuistry of argument, but the irrefutable fact, that when this experience is closely followed, it leads one to Self-realisation. The word *aham,* formed by a combination of the first and the last letters (*a* and *ha*) of the Saṁskrit alphabet, the alpha and omega as it were, is symbolical of the All-inclusive and the Universal and signifies Existence Itself. The sense of ego as expressed in the primary judgement '*I am*' is not a separate *vṛtti* at all, though usually described as such, inasmuch as it underlies every form of mental activity (*vṛtti*) as its necessary implication. The activity of the mind in each of its forms and varieties presupposes the functioning of this ego-consciousness, while the ego-consciousness may appear to be functioning independently. The unique character of

'*I-ness*' (*asmitā*) is, therefore, undoubted. It is this uniqueness of it which endows it with the potentiality of being the first milestone in the spiritual path, the ultimate source of this ego-consciousness or '*I-ness*' being its realisation as pure consciousness, which is free from all mental and egoistic limitations.[26]

Ramaṇa Maharṣi goes on to add that a seeker on the path of Self-enquiry chooses the ego-consciousness as the starting point of his analysis because, as has been stated above, it is the ultimate datum of our experience. The causal body of the ego is the body assumed by it in the state of deep sleep after darkness has overwhelmed its consciousness. To enquire into the source of ego-consciousness, therefore, is to break its sleep and stupor, and to touch its very existence.

The Maharṣi on the Nature of the Ego and the Self:

The ego is not the Self from which it springs, nor is it identical with pure matter. It is of the nature of a knot as it were, a state of the intermingling of Self and not-Self (*cit-jaḍa-granthi*). For one who cultivates the method of Self-enquiry and is able to trace out and reach the source of ego-consciousness, the *cit* aspect of the knot (*granthi*) is taken upwards and led up to the self-destruction of the ego, with the realisation of pure consciousness of the Self. This undifferentiated consciousness of Pure

26. M.G. II., pp. 63-76.

Being is itself, in the language of the Maharṣi, called the *Heart* (*hṛdaya*) referred to above.

The *'I-ness'* (*asmitā*) thus emanates from the *Heart* as the primary datum of human experience. Taken separately, *i.e.*, devoid of all its earthly accretions, it is known as Pure Being (*śuddha sattva*), and it may be noted that the emergence of *'I-consciousness'* is nothing but the appearance of Pure Being (*śuddha sattva*) in that form, in a person on whom the pure Light of Perfect Knowledge has dawned.

From this, the Maharṣi goes into a detailed examination of the ego, its nature, genesis, and dissolution. The individual soul (*jīva*) is only a name given to the ego which arises out of pure consciousness in its relation with matter. The Maharṣi points out that both the mind-stuff (*manaḥ*) and the life-breath (*prāṇa*) grow together out of the same consciousness-force. Mind and life represent the subtle-body (*sūkṣma śarīra*) which is the basis of one's individuality. The subtle body is not eternal and is ultimately dissolved in the wake of supreme spiritual realisation. The dissolution of this body synchronises with the loss of individuality. What is left behind is the Unmanifest Infinite. The appearance of the subtle body from the Unmanifest, and its final disappearance depend entirely on the Unmanifest. What has been described above as the ego, which is a knot (*granthi*) between matter and spirit, is nothing but this very body in its undeveloped condition. This body is partially merged in matter, and is clouded on that score on account of the predominance in it of the

inconscient element. But in a state of proper development, the inconscience is replaced by the consciousness-force (*cit-śakti*), which makes it free from the hold of matter and physical bondage. The progressive development and emancipation of the subtle body implies greater and greater absorption of the consciousness-force (*cit-śakti*), which helps the consequent transformation. When the self-consciousness is in its fullest play, the ego or apparent self (*ahaṁkāra*) is destroyed, and is re-born, as it were, as the real Self. This is the great liberation of man: his full realisation of what is divine in him. The fact is that when the subtle body is developed and strengthened in this process, it becomes the mirror, as it were, to enable the spirit in the *Heart* to be faithfully reflected in it, and the ego asserting itself till then, either disappears altogether or becomes converted into Pure Ego (*śuddha ahaṁkāra*). At this time the subtle body being free from the hold of its material vesture, is so thoroughly changed and invigorated that it can serve as a true receptacle or vehicle of the soul within. It may then be spoken of as an individual centre of the Supreme Consciousness. What follows from this is that the man in whom great transformation takes place, and who as a result becomes *jīvanmukta,* is not led away by the appearance of diversity, for he realises unity in diversity and diversity in unity.

The Maharṣi on Sadguru and His Grace :

The Maharṣi insists on the necessity, in regard to ordinary souls, of guidance from a competent

guru; and in this he is in the same company as that of Rāmakṛṣṇa, Vijayakṛṣṇa, and others, whose emphasis on this point we have already noted. Explaining this point, the Maharṣi says that the Supreme Self, as the Inner Light, imparts spiritual knowledge from within to some exceptional souls, but that this is not what always happens. In ordinary cases, guidance from the external source becomes indispensable. A *guru*, according to the Maharṣi, is absorbed in and aligned with the teachings of the *śāstras*. Moreover, he is not only ordained by God to light the path of others, but in his true being, is the incarnation of Knowledge itself. Explaining further the unique divinisation of the *guru*, and re-echoing thus all the other great saints and seers whom we have considered in this work, the Maharṣi says that the true *guru* is no other than the Supreme Self which abides always in the depths of the *Heart*. The *sadguru*'s grace is deemed indispensable for the spiritual awakening of the disciple. The latter's experience of this grace, the Maharṣi likens to that of an elephant startled and aroused from sleep, after having dreamt of a lion. This shake-up, going into the vitals of the disciple's bodily frame, mind, and heart, initiates and furthers the process of his spiritual awakening. The Maharṣi believes that even a mere glance of the *guru* is enough to dispel the disciple's ignorance and awaken him to the Real.[27]

27. M.G. I. pp. 54-64.

The Maharṣi in Modern India:

There was a time when India was a land of sages and seers, whose light has ever since radiated the heart and soul of man, not only here but in all corners of the world. The present age has, however, brought on a drought in regard to the shower of grace and illumination from the Self-realised soul without which man may live comfortably but cannot help feeling an utter aridity in his inner being. This aridity is dangerous, inasmuch as it gives man a false and deluding sense of comfort and satisfaction, and makes him thus vulnerable to a sudden collapse caused by the rise of false values and criteria about the worth of life — this rise being unavoidable when the spiritual life within has been dried to stone. Hence it is that the spiritually barren man of today continues to stumble and suffer.

What can lift man out of this heap of the poisonously materialistic and power-intoxicated world is a turning of his gaze and concentration upon his inner life, his serious attempt to understand what he really is in his essential being. This alone can give him the true light, life, and succour; end the barrenness of his spiritual life; and lift him out of the stupor and inertia into which the spiritual powers in him have fallen; and, finally, give him that spiritual wisdom which will help him realise himself and understand others to the highest possible degree. It will be then that the problems which vex him today, and defy all attempts for solution, will unknot themselves immediately; his life will be incomparably better and

healthier; his creativity will get a wonderful impetus; and as he becomes in this process the living embodiment of sweetness and light, he will encourage and inspire everybody else to be like him.

But this spiritual rebirth is not an easy process. Very few are there who are able to work themselves up to that degree which is necessary for the revolutionary turning of ways from matter to spirit. To the vast majority, the lead and guidance from a God-gifted seer is essential. The great Maharṣi Ramaṇa, whose life and teachings we have sketched above, was such a saint; one of the very few, indeed, whose advent in this world of spiritual torpor was a heaven-sent blessing for blinded humanity. If a *ṛṣi* is a sanctified sage, an ascetic with realised spiritual powers, Ramaṇa was a *maharṣi*, the tallest and highest among such sages. In every sense he is a *maharṣi*, a *yogin* who has realised Self through self-effort and self-motivation, the inspiration for it coming from his self-awakened spiritual instincts and psycho-spiritual energies. Or otherwise, we cannot explain his early vision which as in the case of the Magi, impelled him to proceed to Aruṇācalam where God's consuming Grace was awaiting him. His entire life, so silently and peacefully led, is one of deep Self-absorption.

Wisdom and light were constantly exuded and transmitted from his personality to aid and solace the thousands of yearning pilgrims whose pilgrimage to the Aruṇācalam shrine was never a barren process of formality but a thrilling experience of coming before the Maharṣi whom many of them considered to be a

living god. From him a ray of light (one of the meanings of *ṛṣi* is a ray of light) that pierced the veil of dross matter which covered their spirit, and gave them an idea of what bliss and peace they could enjoy when they succeeded in reaching the goal which the Maharṣi set for them. The Maharṣi spoke to them about Self-realisation, each word charged with the conviction of his divinised personality; taught them, his teachings cogent, lucid, and precise; and inspired them by his own serene and pure personality, great as the pillar of fire and light which guided Moses and the Israelites on their exodus from Egypt.

The Maharṣi was certainly a superman, who had come to the earth with a heavenly mission in which he so remarkably succeeded. What fills us with wonder and amazement is the phenomenal inner powers with which he was endowed. With just a smattering of school education, he almost instinctively and intuitively arrived at such a proficiency in the cream of the Indian esoteric tradition that his grasp over and interpretation of very subtle metaphysical points amazed everybody. The system of spiritual quest which he expounded was based upon the elements drawn from the Indian philosophical and metaphysical systems. But to these he gave a new, cogent, and clear arrangement — so much so that when we go through his teachings, we are struck by their crystal clear quality and their logical precision. The virtue which is reflected in them and through which we come to know how supreme he was in his spiritual profundity and saintliness. No education can be greater than this for most of us.

CHAPTER X

MOTHER ĀNANDAMAYĪ

1

Birth, parentage, and peculiar features in early life — Nirmalā Sundarī's visions of God in childhood — Her education, marriage, and life at Aṣṭagrām — Nirmalā Sundarī addressed as 'MOTHER' (*MĀ*) — Ānandamayī's trances (*bhāvas*) and different expressions of *samādhi* — Her disciplinary *sādhanā* and observance of silence — Ānandamayī identified with the Supreme Divine — Ānandamayī not formally initiated — The Mother as she is today.

2

Ānandamayī's instructions to the seekers after Divine Life — Obstacles in the course of *sādhanā* — Ānandamayī on the necessity of *Guru* — Ānandamayī on Divine Grace and human effort — Ānandamayī on identity between God and man — Ānandamayī on *Samādhi*; *Samādhi* distinguished from *Bhāvāveśa* — Ānandamayī's view about the way to God-realisation — Ānandamayī on the ways of the concentration of mind — Ānandamayī on the origin and progress of Spiritual Life — Ānandamayī on four kinds of *Samādhi* : (1) *Jaḍa samādhi*, (2) *Savikalpa samādhi*, (3) *Nirvikalpa samādhi*, *and* (4) *Caitanya samādhi*; *Samādhi* and *Bhāvāveśa* — Ānandamayī on different stages of spiritual life : (*a*) *Citta-samādhāna*, (*b*) *Bhāva-samādhāna*, (*c*) *Vyakta-samādhāna*, and (*d*) *Purṇa-samādhāna* — Ānandamayī on the best life — Ānandamayī on Faith — Ānandamayī on the unreality of Visions, and Auditions, etc. — Ānandamayī on *Guru* and disciplinary courses



MOTHER ĀNANDAMAYĪ
(1896 —   )



1

Birth, Parentage, and Peculiar Features in Early Life :

Among the mystics of modern India who have been considered in the present work, Mother Ānandamayī, fortunately, is still in our midst; all others have already left the world. In our list, she too is the only woman who has shown by her example that the spiritual path is not difficult for a member of the fair sex. Her's also has been an extraordinary life of intuitional flashes in early life developing into a steady spiritual flame later on. In this attempt at sketching her life and following it up with a survey and critical review of her system and teaching, the author has had the good fortune to draw her ideas and materials from her close personal contact with the Mother. Yet there is also every likelihood of an over-emphasis or tendentiousness entering into the survey and discussion of Ānandamayī's achievements and greatness, resulting from the lack of the proper objective distance between her and the author. The author has been alert about any possible pitfall of this type and has made all possible efforts to make the survey conform to the discipline of a philosophical enquiry.

Nirmalā Sundarī, more popularly known in recent times as 'Mā Ānandamayī', the name given to her by one of her admirers, was born on April 30, 1896, in Kheorā, a village in the Brāhmanbariā sub-division of the Tripurā district in East Bengal, which is now called Bangladesh. She was the second child of her parents. Her father, Bepin Beharī Bhaṭṭa-cārya belonged to a respectable Brāhmin family noted for scholarly pursuits and devotion to religion. Her mother, Mokṣadā Sundarī, it is said, after the birth of her daughter, took the baby on her lap and then rolled her body in the dust at the base of a holy *tulasi* plant.[1] She did it to avert any possible mishap to the child, because in her mother's heart she could never forget how her first born child had died immediately after its birth. This practice was regularly continued by the mother for about eighteen months, and thereafter, strangely enough, the daughter herself of her own did exactly what the mother had done.

The remarkable quality in Nirmalā Sundarī during her childhood was her wonderfully retentive memory. This prodigious memory has ever been her's from that time. She can recall in detail even now, most of the incidents of her early childhood as we find her referring to them in her later life, in the course of her conversations.

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1. The *tulasi* plant has always been considered holy in most of the *Vaiṣṇava* forms of worship, its leaves being the offerings of the devotee at the feet of the deity, along with flowers. The myth behind the plant's holiness says that God Viṣṇu blessed a woman devotee by transforming her into the plant, the leaves of which would always find a place on the Lord's bosom.

Nirmalā Sundarī's Visions of God in Childhood :

It is a well known fact that the nature and constitution of Nirmalā Sundarī in her early life were of a peculiar cast, being highly susceptible and sensitive to external impressions of a spiritual nature. The effect of the music of *kīrtana* or the chanting of the Holy Name on her was almost magical; so indescribable was the thrill produced by it in her that under its influence she used very often in her childhood or early girlhood to be thrown into an ecstatic condition. Various forms of the gods and goddesses would also appear to her in visions. It is said that in her fifth year she visited a *Śiva* temple in a neighbouring village. It was the occasion of a festival. When she was seated inside the temple, she saw to her amazement that a luminous, dancing figure who, she was sure, was Lord *Śiva* Himself, came out of the stone *Liṅgam*. The dance went on before her charmed gaze for some time, after which the figure re-entered the phallic emblem of stone.

This vision was the first landmark in Nirmalā Sundarī's life. It was a great augury for her future spiritual development. The great cosmic dance of Lord *Śiva* has become part and parcel of the Hindu racial memory. To a Hindu it is the symbol of the divine source of human evolution; the human life to him is set to the rhythm of this great cosmic dance; in short, the myth is the microcosm of the great harmonious and rhythmic macrocosm of this great universe of which the earth is but a small part. Psychologically speaking, this legend is the central point in the col-

lective unconscious of the entire race and civilization. To have the thrilling experience of a vision showing the great *Śiva* in person, dancing in His awe-inspiring abandon the cosmic dance, and that too at the tender age of five, must therefore be considered as a unique experience. In Nirmalā Sundari's case it was a revealing testimony to her intuitive powers, which were in full play even in her early childhood. Moreover, it was a great lightning flash which illuminated her future life and indicated the lines of her subsequent spiritual growth. It must also be known that this vision was not a flash in the pan. The first vision was just a prelude to many other visions in the future.

All through her early years, Nirmalā Sundarī was almost always found to be in a state of abstraction and absent-mindedness, being apparently indifferent to or unconcerned about what was actually happening around her. She used to keep gazing vacantly at the sky even at her meals, a habit for which her mother often upbraided her.

Her Education, Marriage, and Life at Aṣṭagrām :

Nirmalā Sundarī's education was very rudimentary, and confined to a knowledge of the elements of Bengali, her mother tongue, in which she could, with some difficulty, express herself in writing.

In 1909, at the age of thirteen, Nirmalā Sundarī was married to one Ramaṇi Mohan Cakravarty, later

on more widely known as *Bābā* (father) Bholānāth. He belonged to the village of Āṭpārā in the district of Dacca now in Bangladesh. She spent the first four years of her married life in the house of her husband's elder brother, who had to move about from place to place on account of his transfer on official work. During these days most of the time she remained absorbed in a trance-like condition. Sometimes the onset was so strong and uncontrollable that even the discharge of her household duties became difficult for her. She was often taken to task by her elder sister-in-law who naturally had no sympathy further nor probably any faith in her trances, and thought that it was sheer absent-mindedness or shirking of work.

Nirmalā Sundarī Addressed as 'Mother' (*Mā*) :

On the death of her husband's brother in 1913, Nirmalā Sundarī came to stay at Aṣṭagrām with her husband who was working there in the Settlement Department attached to the Estate of the then Nawāb of Dacca. A pious young man of the neighbourhood, named Harakumāra Roy was deeply impressed by the quiet and dignified appearance of Nirmalā Sundarī, and began to look upon her as mother and treat her in the same spirit. He used to visit her very often and help in her household work. He was the first to address Nirmalā Sundarī as 'mother', and it was his prediction that a time would come when the entire country would address her as the 'MOTHER'.

Ānandamayī's Trances (Bhāvas) and Different Expressions of Samādhi :

Ānandamayī's trances (*bhāvas*) were first noticed by others during her stay at Aṣṭagrām, at Bājitpur, and at Shāhbag, Dacca. The slightest note of *kīrtana* would at once make her body stiff and she would then fall on the ground in a dazed condition. This state would continue for a long time. At times she would stand motionless and straight, resting herself on her toe with her hands raised up, eyes steady and fixed, and her body swaying rhythmically with her breath. The *kīrtana* parties would so invariably make her beside herself that she would be seen either dancing round the parties or rolling on the ground in ecstasy. The effects of *bhāva-samādhi* (*sāttvika vikāra*)[2] could be discerned in her person. Her body would often stretch itself out and become taller than usual. At times it became soft as jelly, as if devoid of the bony framework. Various kinds of extraordinary manifestations (*bhāvas*) appear in her body during her stay at Bājitpur in 1918-1923, among which were the *yogic* manipulation, either expanding or contracting of her limbs, and other activities including control of the bodily senses and breathing, *āsanas*, *japa*, *mūdras*, etc. A bright lusture would often be marked emanating from her body which she almost always kept wrapped up. Sometimes it so happened that persons had a

2. The *sāttvika vikāra* is the involuntary expression of feelings in the body, caused by the deep joy felt in the inner being on account of the resplendent nature of the spiritual experience.

benumbing feeling from the mere contact of her body. At times the spot where she sat or would lie appear very hot.

Her Disciplinary Sādhanā and Observance of Silence :

Ānandamayī has all along been living on a surprisingly scanty and meagre food. Yet she has maintained a good health. During the different stages of her *sādhanā*, she ate either only once, late at night, at the completion of her practice of the various *yogic* disciplines (*kriyās*), or only three morsels twice a day. Sometimes her meal used to be reduced to only three grams in the course of the day. At times she would not even touch food. On the other hand sometimes she would consume a large quantity of food, as much as would satisfy ten men's appetites. These were some of the amazing disciplines and ordeals through which she let herself pass. But what struck everybody was the fact that these mortifications did not at all tell upon her health.

During this period at Bājitpur, Ānandamayī observed silence for three years (1923-1926), another *yogic* discipline through which she conducted herself. An interesting phenomenon was sometimes observed in her. Various hymns, in a language which appeared to be Saṁskrit, would gush out of her mouth. At such moments the verses came out of her so rapidly that it was with great difficulty and with doubtful accuracy that the listeners could understand the

meanings or take down portions of these hymns. But hymns certainly these were as could be gauged from certain comparatively clear portions in them and from the way in which she recited them. It was beyond everybody's power of understanding how a young and almost unlettered and uninitiated woman like her could deliver them with such fluency and with so deep a fervour. A sample of these hymns is quoted in the Appendix, of course as inscribed by those who listened to her at that time.

Ānandamayī Identified with the Supreme Divine :

Once in reply to a question by an admirer as to Ānandamayī's real identity, she replied that she was identified with the Supreme Divine (*Purṇabrahman Nārāyaṇa*). During her stay at Shāhbag (1925), once it so happened that she went into a state of ecstasy while listening to a *kīrtana*. In that state she began to walk and finally stopped near a Muslim tomb where she began loudly to recite the *kalmāh* and the verses of the *Qur'ān*, and performed *namāz*. Later being asked how she came to know the rules and principles governing the performance of *namāz*, she said the *namāz* came out spontaneously from within her. She added that meanings of the words used in the *namāz* became revealed to her from within. At Shāhbag she gave up eating her meals with her own hand. One of her admirers, Gurupriyā Devī, until very recently, used to feed her.

Ānandamayī Not Formally Initiated :

Ānandamayī is not known to have received any formal initiation (*dīkṣā*) from a *guru* though she used to follow certain definite principles and methods in her daily *sādhanā*. As a matter of fact both these were self-evolved and spontaneous and did not follow from the teachings of any particular teacher (*guru*) or *śāstras*. It is worth mentioning that the basis of *mantra-sādhanā*, viz., *bīja*, was evolved within herself and not transmitted to her from a human source. The sacred syllable *Oṁkāra* also manifested itself at times, during her trance-like states, through her lips; but as soon as she came back to the normal level of consciousness she remembered, as she told others who made enquiries, that her mother had forbidden her to pronounce the word audibly. Hence the recollection of her mother's prohibition made her stop uttering the mystic syllable any more. Even in the later years, whenever strange *mantras*, including *Oṁkāra*, came automatically out of her lips, she would invariably be in a supranormal psychic condition, evidently free from the discriminative judgement of the lower self. She does not, on principle, in her usual daily life, as we know, transgress the injunctions of the *śāstras*.

The Mother as She Is Today :

There is certainly great merit in leading such a life of purity and spiritual absorption. Mother

Ānandamayī is still with us, full of years, but as buoyant and resilient in her spiritual activities as ever. Her name has become a byword in all communities where there is any respect for the pursuit of the spiritual path and the practice of spiritual discipline. Her missionary work has gone from strength to strength; *āśramas* have been opened all over India, where she is present from time to time. These centres have arranged for effective spiritual discourses and instructions, along with the establishment of agencies for the amelioration of the needy and suffering, and dissemination of education and *brahmacarya* among the adolescents. The Mother has proved through her life that the mystic path is a call for vigorous action for the uplift of the entire community. She is, in this respect, in illustrious company. The Buddha and the Christ, and later many immortal souls, after they had attained Self-realisation, did exactly the same. In Mother Ānandamayī we have the living embodiment of the human being's essential divinity.

2

Ānandamayī's Instructions to the Seekers after Divine Life:

In Ānandamayī's general instructions to the seekers after Divine Life, who have always flocked to her in thousands, she insists upon the importance of God's Holy Name. She says that in the spiritual pursuit of uttering and repeating His Name, it is not indispen-

sable that one should depend on a *guru*. The Name may be chosen by the *sādhaka* himself and reiterated. For an ordinary human being, it is not possible nor is it practicable to engage in the hard and difficult *yogic* practices; but there is no doubt that the Divine Name, the devotion to and the practice of which is relatively easy, if repeated properly, may, in all probability, lead to different kinds of *yogic* activities in the body. She says that repetition of Name ends in the transformation of the *sādhaka* into the glory of the Name itself.

Concentration or will or even knowledge is not an essential condition in this *sādhanā*. The devoted and concentrated repetition of the Holy Name, even when dissociated from the seed sown in the neophyte's inner being by the *sadguru*, through the communication of the *iṣṭa-mantra* and the prescription of the path of *sādhanā*, can become efficacious and lead the *sādhaka* to his cherished goal. Hence independent of any *dīkṣā*, the Holy Name has the potentiality to bring about a dawning of esoteric energy and high spiritual experiences. Hence, the Mother says that the practice of repeating the Holy Name may be unpleasant, at least it may appear to be so in the beginning; but it should be continued for at least three hours a day. This is, she affirms, an essential part of *sādhanā*. As God is one, so His Name is also one— it is really one Name which reveals itself through the infinite varieties of Name. Perseverance in this *sādhanā* leads to concentration, purity, steadiness, and the discrimination of the self from the world. The repetition of the Name carries such a power with it

that sometimes it effects various changes in the body, as it does in the mind.[3]

Obstacles in the Course of Sādhanā :

In the course of this *sādhanā* different obstacles are likely to crop up. But through tenacity in the continued practice, these obstacles are bound to disappear in the long run.[4] Among the factors that go to create these obstacles to the progress in *sādhanā*, the following may be noted as most common and vicious in their effects, and hence are to be guarded against with all energy and alertness :

(*a*) Consumption of unwholesome food, and undesirable personal conduct.

(*b*) Contact with undesirable persons and objects.

(*c*) Talking to persons of doubtful character.

(*d*) Influence of actions done in the previous life, etc.

The Mother says that these obstacles can be surmounted through cultivation of good society, study of the holy works, specially lives of sages, saints, and great men, practice of a quiet life, observance of

3. A.M.P., Vol. I. pp. 4, 49-51, 72, 100-102, 104, 133, 145-147, 171, 176.

4. A.M.P., I. pp. 51-53.

silence, cultivation of the spirit of detachment from the world, and the constant effort to keep fresh and clear in the mind the holy ideal of serving God in the midst of all worldly activities.

Ānandamayī on the Necessity of Guru :

As regards the necessity of guidance from a holy and qualified preceptor (*guru*), Mother Ānandamayī points out that the *guru* is certainly helpful, but is not indispensable. To her the real *guru* is God Himself who is always and everywhere present. If a man is sincere and earnest, if his faith and mind is steady and pure, he will get a *sadguru* in due time. The *sadguru* is a god-sent; he comes of himself, though his advent is a part of God's blessing, if only the spiritually yearning man can keep himself in an expectant, alert, and waking condition. Hence to Ānandamayī the spiritual guidance with which the *guru* provides the disciple is not an one-way affair. It is mutual and reciprocal in character. She says that what is known as *dīkṣā* is the imparting of the living spark, the sowing of the seed (*bīja*) as it were, by the *guru* which, however, for its full fruition depends on the existence of a favourable field and an amenable inner climate (*saṁskāra*) in the mind of the disciple. To the mind where such a pre-condition does not exist, the *guru* does not impart any *bīja* at all. When the *guru* is fortunately obtained, what is needed for the disciple is to put himself under the *guru*'s guidance, faithfully abide by his instructions, and finally

realise the attitude of complete surrender to him.[5] Here we mark how similar are Ānandamayī's views to those held by Vijayakṛṣṇa Gosvāmin and Santadāsa Bābājī, to which we have referred while discussing their contributions and achievements.

Ānandamayī on Divine Grace and Human Effort :

From what has been said above, it is clear that in Mother Ānandamayī's opinion, as it is in the opinion of many other great saints and mystics, both God's Grace and human effort are essential for success in the path of all types of *sādhanā*. Grace, on its part, does not descend unless there is a series of persevering efforts towards moral and spiritual perfection, either in this life or in previous one, on the part of the *sādhaka*. Dilating on the nature of human efforts and on what constitute the incentive behind such efforts, the Mother says that when energy and strength are unabated, a man cannot but act in a spirit asserting and vindicating his consciousness of personal power. The ego is very strong in such a state, and hence the urge for prayer and submission to God is usually very weak. Only as a consequence of shocks and bitter experience of the world does a man feel in the depth of his being how poor and weak he is. Then there is a change in his life.

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5. A.M.P., I. pp. 5, 54, 102-104, 148, 155-156, 168-169; II, pp. 25-26.

With the coming of a realisation of his impotence, man begins desperately to search for a haven, for an agency from which he can get a soothing balm for his afflicted soul. Upon divine mercy he thus fixes his sad and eager gaze. This is the origin of gnosis, in which state it is realised that God is the fountainhead of all activities in the world. Even in this condition, however, the ego persists, and hence action also, though the sense of egoism is much diluted and the action has become steadier and more serene. This action is called *puruṣakāra,* meaning the action of the Supreme Person (*puruṣa*) inherent in man. Hence *puruṣakāra*, when fully performed, begins to urge man along the newer and better path of spiritual realisation; it gives the incentive and vision to enable man to move along the godly path with the bright goal looming large before him. The boat was, as it were, drifting towards shallows and eddies so far; but now the swiftly moving main current begins to carry it towards its ordained goal. This is the signal for the begining of God's Grace in him. What is Grace but really the result of the action of man's previous life or lives ? It is called grace only because man is not conscious of the existence of previous actions. But there may also be unmerited grace which is spontaneous and is governed by no *a priori* factor. If it is, and it often is so, it only represents the free and unrestricted expression of the infinite love, mercy, and beatitude which characterise the Divine Will.[6]

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6. A.M.P., I. p. 53; II. pp. 55-57.

Ānandamayī on Identity between God and Man :

Explaining the above point still further, the Mother says that there is no real difference between God and man (*jīva*). Whatever difference we may find is only an apparent difference, which we in our ignorance think as real. It is absolutely true that all the divine qualities exist in man (*jīva*), and hence for the realisation of a high spiritual ideal we must be able to dispel the ignorance and illusion which continue to cloud our vision. True *Brahman*-relaisation requires a man (*jīva*) to rise above the limitations of both knowledge and ignorance. What we must stand firm upon is the unshakable conviction that the *jīva* in us has the potential divine flame and energy in it. It is God who has assumed the *jīva*'s form. There is no bondage which can curb and delimit our godly dimensions. The senses, limited as they are by their nature, and under the control of which we allow the heart and the mind to act in the worldly life, are the real obstructions. It is the senses which create an illusory hiatus between us and our Creator. They hood us from perceiving our divine essence.

Thus only when we are able to shake off our servile dependence on the senses and the values of exclusive materialism, will it be possible for us to realise what we really are. The dawn of such a day will synchronize with the rise of *puruṣakāra* in us, and as a result the new and thrilling adventure of realising the spiritual goal of life will begin. But lest there should be any mistake about it, the

Mother points out that the human realisation of the divine essence in him does not mean the transformation of the human into the divine, the *jīva* into the *Brahman*. It does not mean the annihilation of the human personality nor does it mean the obliteration of all distinction between the *jīva* and the *Brahman*. The transcendent *Brahman* remains supreme in its unparalleled majesty, away from the *jīva*, though irradiating the latter, now fully realising its divine heritage and also spiritually energised, with its refulgent flame at every movement in the latter's existence.[7]

Ānandamayī on Samādhi; Samādhi Distinguished from Bhāvāveśa :

As regards *samādhi*, Ānandamayī's views are, on certain points, highly interesting, and deserve the closest study, because in her own life intuition has flashed before her in the midst of a number of such states. Keeping ourselves confined to some preliminary remarks on the subject here, and postponing a detailed discussion to a later stage, we may point out that in her concept of *samādhi*, she starts by distinguishing *jaḍa samādhi* from *savikalpa*, *nirvikalpa*, and *caitanya samādhi*. The first one is certainly the lowest of its kind; but even then it is to be differentiated from an apparently similar but very different condition called *bhāvāveśa*, which, viewed in the correct perspective, may be called a state previous to *samādhi*

7. A.M.P., I. pp. 151-153, 209.

rather than its parallel and equal. There are various knots in our system impeding the movement of any psycho-spiritual energy. Unless these are broken, there can be no entrance into the spiritual world. The chief merit of *samādhi* in this connection is that it brings about a state in which the knots are untied and the passage made clear. If this is so, in *jaḍa samādhi*, not all the knots can be untied and hence the spiritual light does not clearly manifest itself through it.

In *bhāvāveśa*, on the other hand, there is a state of tension caused by the devotee's feeling of love for God, accompanied by certain physical effects such as suffusion of the eyes with tears, erection of the hair on the head, etc. A deep feeling (*bhāva*) accompanied by the will-power (*icchā-śakti*), which is certainly a part of the divine in man, lays hold on the entire personality of man and produces the state known as such. It may come spontaneously and independently, or it may be the result of love and devotion coming in the wake of *sādhanā* (*sādhana-bhakti*). Though it is a state of pure and inborn feeling, it is just a feeling. But a *samādhi* is the result of a concerted effort of the spiritual energy, with a definite goal and with different and more lasting after-effects. Moreover, in the state of *samādhi* the physiological effects of the other state do not manifest themselves. There is no stiffness of the body in the *samādhi* in which the eyes remain steady. The *jaḍa samādhi* continued for long may, however, lead to a falling down of the body. Thus the *jaḍa samādhi* can be explained to a fair degree of satisfaction.

But, as the Mother says, in the *nirvikalpa samādhi*, the circumstances are almost inexplicable. In *jaḍa samādhi*, there is no extinction of the mind, though it remains in a submerged condition. When this *samādhi* comes to an end, the effects of it manifest themselves clearly and permanently enough. One of the effects is that the entire outlook on the world is changed.[8]

Ānandamayī's View about the Way to God-realisation :

The first step of the way to Divine Realisation is action or personal exertion, on which, therefore, the Mother lays the strongest emphasis. This is needed so long as one feels within oneself an inner urge for effort. Continued exertion in the right direction leads to that purity of thought which is inexpressible in language. As soon as this purity is established, it becomes evident that action or exertion by itself has no significance. In this state, there is achieved a degree of elevation in which all efforts become useless. The Creator in this state takes man in His own hands, and remakes and refashions him according to His will.

In the words of the Mother man in this state is just a toy in the hands of his Maker, and he lies passive as His hands are busy giving him a new shape. The way to the attainment of this purity lies

8. A.M.P., I. p. 53; II. pp. 55-57.

in unswerving devotion, perseverance, and tenacity. In reaching this state it matters little whether the thought is monistic or dualistic, but it must be an integral one. It is possible to lay emphasis on the consciousness of 'I' or 'Thou'. Either of these two attitudes, if continued, leads to a sense of Supreme Unity, in which all varieties and differences disappear. This sense is unique, and represents an element of Supreme Experience or Gnosis. This experience of *Brahman* is incommunicable. Essentially the human soul (*jīva*) is identical with *Brahman*. Divinity lies hidden and dormant in its nature behind a veil. When the veil is withdrawn, the individual soul realises its identity with the Lord just as the waves of the sea are identical with the open sea, rising from it and going back to it.

Ānandamayī on the Ways of the Concentratoion of Mind:

Spiritual efforts are dependent upon mental concentration on which, likewise, Ānandamayī has much to say. She says that there are different ways of concentrating the mind. Some of the most important and useful ones are the following :

(*a*) the discipline of keeping the body fixed and steady for a long time, which continued with persistence has a lot of merit in it ;

(*b*) the exercise of getting the mind or attention fixed on a particular point or in a particular direction as long as possible, which produces

a soothing effect and removes all mental agitation and restlessness;

(*c*) the persistent devotion to the repetition of God's Name, in spite of the human frailty of mental unsteadiness, which is bound to be cured if there is no slackening of efforts in regard to the repetition of Name;

(*d*) the fullest use of the beneficial effects of a successful attunement of the mind to the rhythm of respiration.

Ānandamayī on the Origin and Progress of Spiritual Life :

Ānandamayī's views on the origin and progress of spiritual life, its ontology and teleology, and its principles *vis-à-vis* human efforts, are essentially a lucid and broad-based elaboration; and description in the paragraphs that follow makes an attempt at reproducing the views in a nut-shell, along with comments and explanations wherever necessary.

Ānandamayī says that so long as a man does not have an inner urge for emancipation from the trammels of mundane life, all guidance and encouragement to him must be deemed useless and unfruitful. A keen sense of the misery which forms the burden of life is in itself a spur, leading one to search for a way of escape out of it. Fundamentally, spiritual life is the enjoyment of the highest freedom; as a liberating process, nothing can be greater than it;

and hence nobody can be forced into it. When a man has seen and realised in the depth of his being that his life is full of misery, when the still sad music of humanity has entered into his heart, he is naturally led to a search for an exit from it and entrance into another state which promises liberation. It is then that the path of freedom opens out before him.

What is needed at this stage is that he should try to concentrate his attention on what lies beyond the horizon of the material world, either through meditation, or through a devoted repetition of Divine Name, or through any other means which may appeal to him. He need not at this stage wait passively for the advent of a *guru*. Efforts on his part are imperative, for he must realise that whatever he does at this time is calculated to help him in his cherished spiritual quest. But if, fortunately for him, a *guru* is found capable of ferrying him across the tempestuous ocean of worldly existence, he should take care and carry out his instruction to the very letter, with all the faith and devotion that he can command. Reliance on the *guru* is certainly a source of great strength.

The *sādhaka* at this stage enters upon a regular course of spiritual activity (*karma*), which is intended to destroy his past *saṁskāras* and usher him into the serene region of spiritual light. But this light is very slow to appear, and it does not establish itself before the mind has got thoroughly cleansed and purified through a process of *samādhi*. The human

soul, in spite of its divine heritage, is bound up to the world of matter by means of innumerable knots or ties (*granthi*). Genuine *samādhi* is possible only when all the knots are loosened. The ties of bondage are of different types and of varying degrees of hardness and intensity; some of them are dense, and some others, tenuous but very subtle. These knots are nothing but man's involvements in the material world, his passions, feelings, thoughts and actions, his *karma* and *bhāva*; and from these he needs be liberated though the spiritual efforts and states of *samādhi* are there, in order to attain the pre-condition for spiritual realisation—the absolute purity of mind.

It is, therefore, clear that the real test of true *samādhi* consists in the elimination or snapping asunder of at least some of these binding knots. The term *samādhi*, which literally means termination (*samādhāna*), represents the elimination of these ties, the coming on of the resultant purity of mind, and finally the establishment of the soul in a flood of spiritual illumination.

Ānandamayī on Four Kinds of Samādhi; Samādhi and Bhāvāveśa :

Samādhi, on which Ānandamayī's emphasis is persistently strong, has already been referred to in a brief manner. To it we return for a more detailed examination. As we have said, Ānandamayī distinguishes four different kinds of *samādhi*, viz., (*i*) *Jaḍa samādhi*,

(*ii*) *Savikalpa samādhi*, (*iii*) *Nirvikalpa samāḍhi*, and (*iv*) *Caitanya samādhi*.

Ānandamayī observes that of these varieties, *jaḍa samādhi* should never be confused with *bhāvāveśa*, because the two are completely different kinds of experience (this has also been pointed out earlier). Outlining the difference between the two states, Ānandamayī says that *bhāvāveśa* is obsession of the mind through *bhāva*, *i.e.*, a strong feeling. Confusion is liable to be created by what may appear as parallel features in the external symptoms of *āveśa* and *samādhi*. But the essential difference between the two is very great.

In *āveśa*, the will-power persists and the mind is permeated with a particular *bhāva*, which is neither pleasant nor painful. In *samādhi*, on the other hand, the will-power completely ceases to exist, and the mind is free not only from the disturbing effects of *karma* but also from the obscuring effect of *bhāva*.

(1) *Jaḍa samādhi* :

In *jaḍa samādhi*, as has already been said, only a few of the knots, that are the impediments created by our material involvements and that prevent the ascent of the spiritual energy in us, are torn asunder ; and there is just an opening made to enable man to have only a glimpse of the serene and illuminated atmosphere of universal life and freedom. We may say that the foundation for this state of *samādhi* is laid by the intense feelings,

i.e., one or more of the *bhāvas* in isolation, and its after-effects also are similar.

(2) *Savikalpa samādhi* :

But when all the *bhāvas* constitute themselves into an integral supreme *bhāva* and are made to produce *samādhi*, what follows is known as *savikalpa samādhi*.

(3) *Nirvikalpa samādhi*

In both of the above different states of *samādhi* there is no transcendence of *bhāvas*, *i.e.*, in these states the feelings and thoughts continue to follow. The man elevates himself to a sufficiently high spiritual altitude but is still not fully liberated from the ego and its activities. However, in the *nirvikalpa* variety of *samādhi*, there is this supreme achievement. This *samādhi* is above all *bhāvas* and all kinds of mental constructions. Being free from even the slightest conceptual element, it is ineffable and does not lend itself to expression in human language.

(4) *Caitanya samādhi*

Caitanya samādhi, which is the last in the group, is not explained; but it is evidently meant to indicate the highest state of *samādhi*, a state of conscious union with the Supreme Reality during normal waking hours, in which there is no falling away from the eternal contact, and the normal activities of life do not stand in the way of this

contact. Hence in this last state, the degree of liberation and elevation is attained in the highest. It is the spontaneous enjoyment of the greatest spiritual bliss with the body and mind still existing and normally functioning, though now charged through and through with the newly gained spiritual energy. In some of its symptoms and circumstances an analogy can be drawn between it and the Buddhist concept of *nirvāṇa*. It is only the wisest and the greatest among us, the *paramahaṁsas*, who are fit to reach this state.

Ānandamayī on Different Stages of Spiritual Life :

The different stages of spiritual life according to Ānandamayī may be interpreted in terms of four progressive degrees of *samādhāna*, *i.e.*, the parting of ways with our material and egoistic involvements, gained through *samādhi*. These stages which by their very nature occupy an important place in Mother Ānandamayī's teachings, deserve a detailed analysis and explanation, which we attempt in the following lines.

The highest spiritual goal being the realisation of the Supreme (*Brahman*), the pursuit of it may be for the static or the dynamic manifestation of it, depending on the nature of the path chosen for the realisation of this goal, and the nature of the vision which inspires the seeker. To Ānandamayī this duality does not deserve to be given much

importance at all. Her concept of *samādhi* is unique inasmuch as through it she holds up before us the picture of the Supreme Truth, which is both dynamic and static and at the same time superior to these attributes. It is this Supreme Truth which to her is the *summum bonum* of life. Integral as it is, the Truth demands a mode of pursuit which is concerted, integral, and beyond all circumstances of multiplicity. The concept of *samādhi*, as she holds and advocates, comprehends this integrated and concerted effort to reach the highest spiritual destination. The pursuit, as she explains thus, is an integral spiritual movement, a progressive ascent and elevation in which there are certain important milestones; she describes these as the relative poises, the arrival at each of which gives a greater freedom, amplitude, and momentum to the soul, which goes through a wonderful process of evolution in this way. These may be described as *citta-samādhāna*, *bhāva-samādhāna*, and *vyakta-samādhāna*, the three successive stages of the inward spiritual development. In each, a certain knot or knots are untied, a greater freedom and energy gained, and more path towards the goal covered. But something is always still left to be destroyed, and something still to be achieved. The culminating point thus comes only when *pūrṇa samādhāna* is achieved.

(*a*) *Citta-samādhāna* :

To dilate upon these progressive stages, we find that the first, *i.e.*, the *citta-samādhāna*, marks

the elimination of man's worldly desires, passions, and similar ties with the world of materialism and self. Since it is these propensities and circumstances which balk attempts at spiritual progress, these need be rendered innocuous as a condition antecedent to an illumination of the inner life. The *samādhi* of the *sādhaka* sets into action a vigorous inner culture on the strength of which the mind ceases to be distressed any more by the passions and desires. Seen in the perspective of mental evolution, this state should be described as the incipient condition of the evolutionary movement, with the mind reduced to an absolutely dry and light state—exactly that state in which it can be easily set aflame; of course the flame is that of the resurgent spiritual energies, for the release and permeation of which the dried-up mind, with its extraneous sensors cut off, paves the path. That is, this state of the purification of mind makes it ready to become the lamp where the fire of knowledge, emanating from the all-pervasive influence of the Supreme Truth, will glow. Hence the stage is called *citta-samādhāna* or *bhāva-śuddhi*. Another important aspect of it is that on account of the divergence in human nature, the manifestation of this state may be different in different people; in some it may even have a completely overpowering effect upon the human mind.

(*b*) *Bhāva-samādhāna* :

The second state, called *bhāva-samādhāna*, marks the resolution of greater problems, the acquisition

of a greater purity of mind, and on the whole a distinct advancement beyond the condition gained at the end of the first stage. The stimulii now are all inner; the integration of the different feelings conducive to spiritual elevation are now complete. The concerted action of the feelings, described by the Mother as the integral *bhāva*, now completely lays hold upon the mind, all other feelings and stimulii connected with the outer world having been completely ousted. The condition of the physical frame in this stage is that of an apparent benumbing of the powers. As far as its relation to the outer world is concerned, it lies stupefied and dazed, completely dead to what is happening outside. But at the same time there is vigorous activity inside; the impact of the integral *bhāva* upon the mind is so intense and overwhelming that the whole personality is keyed to this single harmony. The impact is so strong and overflowing that the mind of the *sādhaka* is completely inundated, the overflow of the harmony even filling the world outside. It goes without saying that at no other previous moment of his life has the *sādhaka* had such a powerful, concerted, and harmonious activity of the mind.

(*c*) *Vyakta-samādhāna* :

The mind having become ready for positive spiritual achievement in the foregoing stage, the next stage, the third, called *vyakta-samādhāna* marks the illumination of knowledge in the mind. It is certainly the essence of knowledge, the highest

and the best conceivable. The light burns within, but its flame irradiates the whole universe, inner and outer both. With this knowledge now in full command, the soul of man gets fully absorbed in the contemplation of the Supreme Truth, *Brahman*. But yet the achievement is not complete. The *sādhaka* in this state has to reckon with the duality of Form and Formless. The gulf between the two is not bridged, even though the process towards it has already commenced and the path towards it has been lighted by the newly achieved knowledge and absorption.

(*d*) *Pūrṇa-samādhāna* :

The goal is finally reached in the fourth and last stage, called *pūrṇa-samādhāna*, in which all dualities melt away in the wake of the *sādhaka's* complete absorption in and consciousness of the Truth and Unity — the supreme attributes of the Absolute. In this transcendent state, what is Supreme is also visualized as Immanent. The *sādhaka* perceives at once and in a great harmony both the Form and the Formless, the *saguṇa* and the *nirguṇa*, the *sākāra* and the *nirākāra*. As regards the *bhāva* persisting at the earlier stages, in this stage each form of *bhāva* is transcended. The ripples of the thought-vibrations in the mind do not exist at all. The *sādhaka* has overcome all thoughts and all actions; he has reached a state beyond all ignorance and beyond all knowledge either. Yet this stage does not envisage any annihilation of the mind and the body, both of

which exist, sustained by the concentration upon a particular principle or vision. The dependence on the principle or vision also is temporary. It leads on to a state in which everything is universalized, all egoistic elements are washed away, and the absorption in the One is seen reflected everywhere. Even this realisation of the all-pervasive Unity finally disappears. The *bhāvātīta* condition is transcended. When this state is attained, it means the *sādhaka* has reached the highest state of the *nirvikalpa samādhi*. The poor human body with all its physiological processes can hardly be expected to function in this state of infinite and ineffable bliss. As a consequence, the body ceases to function, inasmuch as the respiration is stopped, the cells dazed, and the various organs deprived of their power of functioning. Quite likely, the Mother points out, that if the state continues for some time, the body may even be destroyed.

But in this above context, the Mother adumbrates her conception of the highest form of *yoga*, called by her *Mahāyoga*, which is the state of the *sādhaka* who has attained the apex of *nirvikalpa samādhi* with the sole purpose of general good. Such a *sādhaka* does not suffer annihilation after the supreme experiences of the above state, and after having returned to his normal state, continues to live as the fountainhead of spiritual energy for the welfare of mankind. But what should be remembered in this connection is that, unlike the ordinary *yogin*, the *Mahāyogin* soars above all laws of *karma* and all the other hindrances

that attachment to life always brings about. To a *sādhaka* this is, therefore, the highest goal, attained through his progressive stage of success in *sādhanā*; in this state *samādhi* occupies the pride of place, along which path all problems, knots, limitations, doubts are resolved, the *samādhāna* achieved and the *sādhaka* realises his true divine heritage — that pure and essential state in which there is no difference between him and his Creator.

It is interesting to study the personal achievement of Mother Ānandamayī *vis-á-vis* her view on *sādhanā* and *samādhi* as stated above. There is no doubt that she is a *sādhaka* of the highest order and her views of *sādhanā* must be a substantial part of her life-philosophy. But the question is whether she has, in her life of *sādhanā*, passed through the stages of *samādhāna* as stated above, and whether in the process she has reached the *Bhāvātīta* and *Mahāyoga* stages. A study of her life, however, does not indicate everything that has been outlined above. Moreover, it is difficult to see everything in the correct perspective, in the midst of the resplendent glory of her apparently serene but wonderfully dynamic personality, which, to our great fortune, is so near us. One of her great admirers, one who is a doyen among the living Indian scholars of philosophy and esoteric science, has found in her a certain uniqueness in the above respect; and we, on our part, fully associate ourselves with his view. To quote from his writings :

"It is evident from the above that the state of *Mahāyoga* bears a faint resemblance to Mother's own condition, with this difference that while

Mahāyoga is the logical culmination of a series of prior *Sādhanās*, Mother's state, as such, was not evolved in that way. It has appeared with Her and will disappear with Her."[9]

Ānandamayī on the Best Life :

Mother Ānandamayī's views on *sādhanā*, along the path of *samādhāna* through *samādhi*, are not intended for the layman; the progressive states of *samādhi* entail a discipline and an integrated application of the entire personality, which, she fully realises, are too much to be expected of the commonalty. It is only the rare dedicated souls, with unshakable faith, endurance, and courage of conviction, for whom this path, as difficult as the razor's edge, may be found suitable. Hence, in her unbounded wisdom, she prescribes an easier and a conveniently negotiable path for the vast majority of yearning souls, who also in their humble ways seek for the spiritual light and solace from the vagaries and vicissitudes of an exclusively materialistic life.

To them she gives the rousing hope that they may also, within their limited capacities, make efforts for an upward movement, from the world of matter to the world of spirit, and may rest assured that no

9. A paper on *Mother Ānandamayī* by M/M. Pt. Gopīnāth Kavirāj in *Mā Ānandamayī* by Devotees (a commemoration volume of essays presented to the Mother on the occasion of her fiftieth birthday), pp. 27-31.

effort in this direction is completely unavailing. It may also be that sustained efforts in this direction will contribute towards the gaining of new powers and the conquest over the enemies of spiritual progress. With the power thus gained, even for a layman it may not be impossible in the long run to be endowed with the superior attributes of a great *sādhaka*. To the common run of humanity, therefore, the Mother gives a series of practical advice, something of the nature of categorical imperatives, easy to follow, and holding in them the virtue and merit of yielding rich fruits to those who follow them. To these we now turn in the paragraphs that follow.

We should, Mother Ānandamayī tells us, all live as far as possible in the constant consciousness of the immanence and omnipotence of God. We should also acquire the habit of constantly repeating God's Name, which embodies in it God's omnipotence. Supreme peace, freedom, and power all flow from it, a fraction of which even has the power to redeem us. Even if the right spiritual guide (*guru*) has not been found, there is no cause for concern and loss of hope, for God's Name is all-powerful and has its unique virtue. Its powerful beneficial effects are certain to come, and though not immediately perceived, they do come in the course of time.

Ānandamayī on Faith :

Simple faith has great power in bringing about the spiritual regeneration of man. If a man has faith,

he has nothing to fear; faith provides the strongest foundation for the edifice of man's spiritual life. It bids fair to supreme achievements. Simple faith may be blind, inasmuch as it may not have the light of knowledge and the power of discernment to guide it along the correct path. But it is, all the same, potent and highly efficacious. On the wonders that faith can achieve, the Mother says that if a man's faith is sincere, and if, in his ignorance and naïvete, he follows and repeats an incorrect *mantra* — not realising that the *mantra* is not suited to his nature and may even do him harm — he will not have to suffer any evil on this account. In all such cases the faithful devotee will be under the protection of the Divine, who will see to it that the *mantra* is corrected and the seeker after truth is directed along the correct path. In all such cases, the Divine Dispensation works through flashes of intuition, which makes it incumbent upon the devotee to rectify his path. The fact is that God always responds to sincere faith and disposes everything accordingly.

Ānandamayī on the Unreliability of Visions, Auditions, etc.:

But visionary flashes, important though they may be, are not of supreme importance, Ānandamayī emphasises. It would be poor spiritual life indeed in which everything was motivated and directed towards the incidence of the visionary experiences. People should not be carried away, therefore, by the apparently alluring prospect of seeing visions (*rūpa-*

darśana) and hearing voices (*vāṇī-śravaṇa*). These have their uses, no doubt, as already said; but a true seeker ought to be able to know their real worth and take them for what they are. The real vision one must know, is that which satisfies one's thirst for vision forever; and this also holds good in respect of hearing voices and other such phenomena. We should, therefore, be always on our guard against attaching any undue importance to visions, auditions, etc., which are, after all, external affairs, at the most. On the attainment of Truth, all desires for visions, audition, etc., vanish altogether. Those who have the privilege of being under the guidance of a *guru* should surrender themselves absolutely to his will. The unswerving devotion and singleness of aim are the means of surrender to the *guru*, which brings about an achievement of great moment along the spiritual path. In addition, constant meditation, repetition of Holy Name, and singing of the glories thereof are also helpful.

Ānandamayī on Guru and Disciplinary Courses of Sādhanā :

What does true surrender mean ? The Mother says that it is very desirable to consider oneself a mere instrument in the hand of the *guru*. One should not ambitiously look forward to a particular spiritual condition, which is another way for the ego to assert itself. What one must have clearly in mind is that what is to happen, will happen by itself through

God's will. Nobody will be able to resist it. The initial efforts at surrendering oneself may not be very pleasant, and one is likely to fret under the restrictions that are the concomitants of an act of surrender. But these have to be borne patiently.

But the question of restriction need be understood correctly. No spiritual path, it must be known, will be of any avail, and no progress will be possible if the course of things is against one's natural grain. Following the natural course is, therefore, the best. A man should be led along the path which is in harmony with his tastes, capacities, and predilections. There is no room for pressure or coercion in spiritual education. Everyone should be allowed to develop himself in an atmosphere of freedom unhindered by artificial conventions and contradictory suggestions. Tyranny and totalitarian authority can never be conducive to the pursuit of the highest state of liberation.

Yet through the impetus given by the innate spiritual urge, a certain amount of preparation is necessary, along with the practice of discipline which facilitates the preparation. According to Mother Ānandamayī it is in the fitness of things that a man who has not realised the joy of the Supreme Truth, and who has still to perceive the importance of mental concentration as an essential prerequisite for the realisation, should find his mind wandering about here and there. That the mind should be unsteady and restless is only natural. What is known as *sādhanā* or spiritual discipline is nothing but the regular adoption of various methods and devices

to achieve control of the mind. This disciplinary course includes repetition of God's Name (*japa*), frequenting associations of devout people engaged in discussing spiritual topics (*satsaṅga*), systematic study of sacred literature (*svādhyāya*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and other similar practices. Every man should devote as much time as he can to the practice or practices among those described above, which are congenial to his nature.

Ānandamayī on the Ideal View of the World :

Ānandamayī insists that men of the world, lest they should get bogged down in the quicksand of material life, should regard the world as a state in which they are required to play their parts. They should always remember that the worldly life is merely a halting stage in the greater journey of life, rather than a permanent resting place. Some people forget this simple truth, and become engrossed in worldly pre-occupations to such an extent that they wrongly regard the world as their permanent abode.[10] This attitude should, therefore, be changed altogether. Spiritual seekers — men who have developed the conviction that they must spiritually elevate themselves to realise all the God-given potentialities with which the soul is endowed — should be wise enough, however,

10. We may refer here to Yudhiṣṭhira's reply to Yakṣa in Mahābhārata where Yudhiṣṭhira says that the greatest wonder in the world is that though hundreds of people die every day, those who are left behind think themselves to be immortal.

to keep their high aim entirely to themselves. While they are required never to slacken their efforts towards reaching their spiritual goal, they are also expected to continue their normal worldly life in harmony with others. In this connection it may be pointed out that it is the angle of vision which is very important. The point of view or attitude has in it a secret which can transform the whole world in the eyes of the beholder. Thus it is possible to convert the world with all its diverse elements into a kingdom of purity and happiness. It is possible, for instance, to regard one's parents as the incarnations of the parental attributes of our Creator, one's husband as the Lord of the Universe, and one's children as the multitudinous forms of the child *Kṛṣṇa* (*Bāla-Gopāla*) or of the child *Pārvati*. This broad pantheistic vision will help establish a spiritual kinship among all human beings; it will be a world in which all persons, known and unknown, are bound to one another and to the *sadhāka* by certain ties of personal relationship. If this process of mental transformation and change of attitude implied in it be continued for some length of time, it will change the *sādhaka*'s entire personality and lead him nearer to his goal.

Ānandamayī on Education to Children :

It is absolutely necessary, the Mother says, to impart religious education to the children. Parents, guardians, and the high authorities of our educational institutions are ultimately responsible for moulding the life and character of the children in their charge.

They must realise that a wisely placed religious outlook in the system of education goes a long way towards moulding the future life of the children in the pattern of the best ideals of religion. This education need not be exclusive or the only education provided, but should be the foundation for the educational structure on which is placed the children's future development.[11]

The practice of *brahmacarya*, the development of a self-motivation towards the spiritual ideals, the constant awareness of the majesty and beatitude of God and our littleness before Him, the necessity of the cultivation of devotion, love, and compassion in the heart, and ceaseless effort in the midst of our duties and avocations towards Self-realisation — these are the ideals which the Mother, in her constructive vision, sees as the essential prerequisites for the educational system, aimed at making the future generation share, in all its fullness, the bliss which is our divine heritage, and which, unfortunately in the present generation, we have persistently neglected, and as a consequence brought about the present state of acute tension and general lassitude.

The Mother's Cheering Message to Humanity :

The Mother has watched with great concern the present state of disquiet and disenchantment. Her's

11. The *Vidyāpīṭha* founded in Dehrā Dun in Mother's name, along with the *Kaṇyāpīṭha* in Vārānasī, is intended to serve as an institution of this kind.

is the cheering message to those who feel as if they are beyond any redemption; that failure, howsoever stunning, need not produce any sentiment of the futility of further spiritual efforts. If there is a real craving for God in the heart, she says, there is no reason for despondency. A person may come to feel that in spite of his best efforts to lead a pious life, he is unsuccessful and is unable to make any satisfactory progress; he is apt to regard his life as a failure. This sense of failure itself, he must realise, is an indication that some good has been achieved. To every man the constantly guiding idea should be that, even if his thoughts are directed to the Divine for a single moment, it is not to be regarded as of little consequence.

Mother Ānandamayī, A Dynamic Spiritual Personality in Modern India :

Mother Ānandamayī's personality, like that of all great saints, is of myriad-faces. In a brief compass like this, it is almost impossible even simply to indicate the various sides of her profundity of divinisation, which is the fountainhead of her rich and varied contributions to our life. From an obscure village near Dacca, now in Bangladesh, at the close of the last century, she has had a long road to travel to reach the present state of her mature spiritualisation and her eminence among thousands in this country and abroad. The spirit bloweth where it listeth; and the spiritual fervour and intensity in Mother Ānandamayī

have been a part of the great and divine benedictions gifted with which she has come in our midst. Her early states of trances (*bhāvas*) and *samādhi*, and her almost phenomenal occult powers, even when she was in her teens, show how divinely gifted she was at her birth. These powers she has methodically cultivated. Almost as a *Mahāyogin* has she reached the highest state of Self-realisation, in the midst of her equally dedicated task of doing good to her fellow-men, and finally has become the living symbol of the peace and plenitude that a true spiritual elevation yields to man. The *sādhanā* she has herself practised, and in which she has reached consummation, has been of a unique kind: almost a miracle to achieve in the sphere of spiritual realisation. Yet she has remained deeply human. In the world of spiritual abstraction she has soared with the freedom and poise of an angel; at the same time, in the practical world of human weal, she has never ceased to minister to the physical, intellectual, moral, and spiritual needs of man.

In her teachings, even the most abstruse esoteric principles have been expressed with a clarity and precision almost unrivalled. Her path of moral and spiritual discipline, which she has all along explained to her disciples and admirers in her own inimitable way, has been one which can never appear to be too difficult to be pursued by the layman; while the dialectic on which the path is founded has been the essence of the spiritual wisdom of our land, which led such superior beings as the Buddha, Mahāvīra, Śaṅkara, Caitanya, and Ṭukārāma to their goal. No wonder,

the benign and transcendent personality of the Mother, has become today the living symbol of man's emancipation, to which have flocked the thousands from all corners, men and women, the rich and the poor, the leaders and the led — to all of them the Mother's teachings have been a great source of light and inspiration. May we hope and pray that she be alive and active in our midst for many more years to come, to usher in the dawn of a new age of love, joy, and peace in which each heart will be charged with the highest spiritual energy and the mind illuminated by the best spiritual Wisdom.

Supplement To

Volume Two

Chapter XI

SVĀMĪ PŪRṆĀNANDA AND YOGIN ŚYĀMĀCARAṆA

1

Introductory — Pūrṇānanda's view on Self-realisation — Human suffering emanating from the respiratory process — Analysis of human respiration — Two movements represented by sounds — Pūrṇānanda's theory of *Cāturvarṇa*; sense of ego; *Aham* — His theory of *Mūla-mantra* and Creation — Liquidation of the ego-sense — *Guru-bīja* — The state of *Para Brahman.*

2

Brahmacārin Harinārāyaṇa, the disciple and interpreter of Śyāmācaraṇa Lāhirī — Śyāmācaraṇa's cryptic language — His view of Supreme Reality — *Brahman* and *Śakti* — *Kriyā-śakti* and *Jñāna-śakti* — Three aspects of the Supreme *Māyā* — Creative process — State of the human soul — *Jīva* and *Īśvara* — *Guru*, the Supreme Reality — Three kinds of *Dīkṣā* : (*a*) *Cakṣu-dīkṣā*, (*b*) *Mantra-dīkṣā, and* (*c*) *Sparśa-dīkṣā* — The Supreme State — *Turīyātīta*.

1

Introductory :

In our survey of contemporary Indian mysticism in the light of the achievements and contribu-

tions of some of the well-known Self-realised mystics of the land, we have justifiably confined our remarks, criticisms, and observations to the mystic-saints and seers whose lives and teachings are embodied in the present work. But we need not be apologetic, if we say that it is certainly true that the mystics selected by us are representative in character. As a matter of fact they do not totally represent certain particular lines of culture and self-discipline, held to be more or less prominent on account of their popularity down the ages. Each of them is unique in his or her way, though all of them show various degrees of alignment with the popular point of view regarding mysticism, and also a good deal of overlapping among themselves.

Yet on no account should it be deemed that the list is exhaustive, and that the types taken up for study in this work represent all or even most of the lines of culture recognised in practice.

We have, for instance, left out of account the original mystical contributions of many genuine saints of different denominations, associated with the varied orders of *Bāul, Sahajiyā, Tāntrika, Avadhūta, Darveśa, Santa*, and others. That the saints belonging to each of these orders possess a living spiritual tradition and claim to be guided by it is a fact about which there can be no doubt. Over and above all these, we have the cases of individual divergences in regard to the paths pursued, that are also familiar to us, but that have not been taken into any detailed

consideration simply to avoid any further inflation of the bulk of the present work. Likewise we have left aside mystics who have done no literary work and furnished no account of their own individual culture, either through personal effort and initiative or through the efforts of their disciples and admirers.

Yet in the midst of the large number of mystic-saints whom we have not been able to bring within the ambit of the present study, we feel that we shall be failing in our duty if we do not consider the mystic achievements of some of the eminent among them. We are well aware that there are cases of specific individuals who rose very high in spiritual eminence, and whose points of view are available for study in the form of printed materials on which we can entirely depend. By way of example, we may briefly refer to the lives and teachings of two great saints, who both belonged to contemporary India and attained great spiritual elevation on account of their saintly lives. We are speaking of Svāmī Pūrṇānanda (1834-1928), the founder of Jagatpurā Āśrama, Citāgong, now in Bangladesh; and Śyāmācaraṇa Lāhirī (1828-1895), the great *yogin* of Vārānasī.

Pūrṇānanda is said to have got his initiation from a great *yogin* in the Himālayas known as *Ṛṣi* Mātaṅga. Śyāmācaraṇa also received his spiritual message and power from a similar saint in the Himālayas, whose name was never revealed to others. Śyāmācaraṇa is said to have come in contact with him at Rānikhet in the foothills of the Himālayas, near Nainital.

For the specific purposes of our study we do not consider the biographical parts of the lives of these two saints to be as important as the teachings which they received from their respective *gurus* and which they communicated to their followers. Hence in the following pages we shall only attempt at a brief summary of their views, doctrines, and teachings. In the case of Śyāmācaraṇa, it may be of some interest to note that he left behind him not only a number of works embodying his teachings, but also a number of disciples who seriously tried to emulate the saint in respect to the spiritual path which he pursued with great distinction and by which he deeply impressed others.

The most noteworthy among his disciples was Brahmacārin Harinārāyaṇa, who died in 1945. The Brahmacārin passed through the higher stages of *Yoga* under the guidance of his master, and attained direct illumination. He also rendered a great service to the world by writing books on his *guru* and his teachings. It goes without saying that any survey or summary of Śyāmācaraṇa's teachings has to be based on the saint's own literary efforts. But the difficulty lies in the fact that the writings are extremely cryptic and pose a problem to the reader at each step. Hence, the alternative lies solely in falling back upon the writings of his disciple, Brahmacārin Harinārāyaṇa, who succeeded in translating his message into practice in his personal life, and whose *bona fides* is unquestionable in this respect.

Pūrṇānanda on Self-realisation; His Theory of Cāturvarṇa :

Like most of the great Indian sages and seers Svāmī Pūrṇānanda's initial emphasis is on human sorrow. He says that freedom from pain and attainment of genuine peace are possible to a man only through realisation of his true Self. All the troubles that beset us spring from our false or illusory self, *i.e.*, the desires, aversions, attachments, and different kinds of worldly propensities rooted in our egoistic sense. The symbolic expression for this egoistic sense is to be found in the combination of the sounds *a*, *ha*, and *ma*, which represent phonetically the Saṁskrit word *aham*, signifying ego. The Svāmī observes that this sense is not the product of chance, but arises out of an activity within us, in which the element of repulsion is stronger than that of attraction.

To have a clearer grasp of this, we must have an idea of his theory of breathing and of the phonemes of language. To him all the activities of the world—creative, preservative, or destructive — are due to the various permutations and combinations of the basic movements of attraction and repulsion in us. The entire respiratory process is based on these movements, and the manifested and articulate egoistic sense of man is causally connected with the breathing. If one attends closely to one's own respiratory process, it will be found that when the breath is drawn in and then exhaled through the mouth, there take place movements and counter-movements along the region from the throat region down to the *mūlādhāra*, and back

from *mūlādhāra* to the throat region. Every movement is accompanied by a corresponding sound. These movements and counter-movements are represented respectively by the sounds *a* and *ha*. On the contrary, when the mouth is closed and the breath is drawn in and thrown out through the nostrils, there arise similar movements from *sahasrāra*, the crown of the head, which go down to the *mūlādhāra* and then rising from the *mūlādhāra* go up to the *sahasrāra*. The sounds of these movements are *uṁ* and *huṁ*. These four original sounds represented by the four letters mentioned above form the basis of Pūrṇānanda's mystical theory of 'four-letters' (*Cāturvarṇa*).

Pūrṇānanda on Mūla-mantra, Guru-bīja, etc. :

On the face of it, the theory appears ingenious and is likely to throw a block before the common reader. But the Svāmī not merely based all his principles of *sādhanā* upon this theory but interpreted it to his disciples in a lucid manner. As an aid to understanding, we cannot but refer to it in fair detail. To the Svāmī, this close association of the spiritual well-being of man or otherwise with the physiological rhythm of the respiratory process is a natural one, and it, he says, is the force behind the genesis of all the phonetic symbols of the alphabet, both vowels and consonants, voiced and unvoiced, not merely in Saṁskrit but in all other human languages of the world. It is thus clear that the letters *a* and *uṁ* represent the attractive and incoming

movements, and the letters *ha* and *huṁ* the repulsive or outgoing movements. The sound *a* moves from the base of *mūlādhāra* upwards to the throat with the inhalation of breath, and the sound *ha* moves from the throat downwards to the base of *mūlādhāra*, with the exhalation. Due to resistance in the back of *mūlā-dhāra*, the latter movement turns back and gives rise to the sound *ṁ* called *bindu* in Saṁskrit. The three sounds taken together constitute the morpheme *ahaṁ* (the Saṁskrit word *ahaṁ* stands for the ego). Thus is the ego-sense born in man; and as set forth in the above analysis, it is inseparably associated with the entire breathing process. It is evident that the downward descent is caused by the repulsive force of *ha*.

Pūrṇānanda says that in order to realise the true Self in its essence, what is most urgently needed is that we should be able to tackle and come to grips with the *ha* movement which has thrown us down to *mūlādhāra*. We must be able to make it rise up to our own true self as identified with *Oṁkāra* or *Praṇava*. The esoteric device which enables us to effect this inner revolution is known in all spiritual culture as *mūla-mantra*, which is the embodiment of a great positive energy, and represents the equilibrium of forces. It is pure, eternal, and immutable.

Likewise, the question of life and death is intimately associated with the theory explained above. As the Svāmī sees it, creation or the arrival of the pulsation of life implies a disturbance in the original equilibrium or *mūla-mantra*. Due to gradually intensive movements of the above currents going on in

the inner being of man, the original consciousness comes down from the *sahasrāra*, the crown of the head, to the region of the throat (*kaṇṭha*), evolving in this process five graded sounds, viz., *uṁ*, *iṁ*, *ṛ*, *lṛ*, *a* ; and from the rise of these five elements, the five sensory powers are evolved. Thereafter the movement of *a* from the throat (*kaṇṭha*) produces a series of sounds as consonants and reaches down to *mūlādhāra*, the centre of the sound *ha*. The upward and downward movements between *a* and *ha* lie at the bottom of our ego-sense. When the movement becomes very strong, and compels the individual movement of *ha* to be converted into a hard aspiration, denoted by the linguistic symbol of *visarga* (*ḥ*), the ego-sense vanishes altogether and death follows.

Thus it goes without saying that all our desires and inclinations are connected with the sounds associated with the different letters of the alphabet. Hence until all the sounds are liquidated, it is not possible to get rid of the ego. The device which helps us to overcome these egoistic activities and enables us to realise our true Self is technically called, according to Svāmī Pūrṇānanda, the *Guru-bīja*. An analysis of this *bīja* is not seriously called for in this place, because our purpose here is merely to give an idea of Svāmī Pūrṇānanda's theory of *sādhanā*. Let us, therefore, confine ourselves to a brief explanation of the matter. *Guru* is a synonym for *Brahman*. The first sound evolved after the disturbance in the equilibrium is the subtle manifestation of *Guru*, of which the symbol is *uṁ*. This is the state of *Śabda Brahman*.

It leads to *Para Brahman*, which is undoubtedly the Supreme Self.[1]

It is thus undeniable that, on first glance, Svāmī Pūrṇānanda's approach to spiritual realisation has an element of novelty about it. Yet the novelty which may be seen in his rather unusual association of the respiratory process and the articulation of sound with the spiritual currents latent in man, is, as seen through analysis, not very original and unique. Basically it is the *Yogic Sādhanā*. The *Vedāntin* or the *Tāntrika* also may find many parallels in it with their systems. The most interesting analogy, which the Svāmī's path invites, is with the path prescribed in the Rādhāsvāmi Brotherhood, about which we have had occasion to go into a good deal of detail in the chapter on Svāmījī Mahārāj. However, in the field of spiritual culture, this comparatively little-known saint was certainly a great adept who lived the life which he preached.

2

Śyāmācaraṇa on Supreme Reality :

As already observed, we propose to give only a brief resumé of the central idea in the achievements and teachings of the great mystic Śyāmācaraṇa Lāhirī, through the explanatory observations of one of his foremost disciples, viz., Brahmacārin Harinārāyaṇa,

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1. P.P., Vol. I and II.

We, however, have no idea of belittling the value and importance of the works coming from the saint himself, though, as we have said, it is not at all an easy job to interpret them. The saint is credited with the authorship of a number of works which were written out by his disciples at his dictation. Their abstruse and esoteric content, along with their condensed and cryptic style, makes them intelligible only to the initiated, but baffling to others. However, these works are still available, for a close study of his system. A diligent and critical analysis of the contents of these works will certainly be very fruitful, if the aim is to go in for a comprehensive estimate and assessment of what the great *yogin* stood for. Similarly these must be held indispensable if we were engaged in an intensive study of his life, with the aim of revealing the deeper springs of his mystic life.

The following lines are, therefore, intended to bring out the kernel of Śyāmācaraṇa's *sādhanā* and teachings, purely on the basis of the explications of his principal disciple, Harinārāyaṇa. Śyāmācaraṇa starts with the exposition of the Supreme Reality called *Para Brahman*, embodying the highest goal of human aspiration. It is in fact absolutely identical with the Self in man, and is in its essence above the limitations of quality (*guṇa*) and action (*kriyā*), so that it cannot be described as endowed with either the basic ingredients of the physical being (*saguṇa*), or subject to the law of *karma* (*sakriya*), or even their negatives, *nirguṇa* and *niṣkriya*. To him also, like many other great saints of India, *Para Brahman* or *Ātman* is

realised in the human body in *sahasrāra, i.e.*, the shrine for this Universal Spirit in the human body, the crown of the head. *Para Brahman* is the source and repository of an infinite Power which is, in essence, one with it. This Power is called *Parā Śakti*; it reveals itself in the centre known as *lalanā-cakra*.

Brahman and Śakti; Māyā and Its Three Aspects :

Both *Brahman* and its Power (*Śakti*) are essentially transcendent. What is mysterious is the origin of Will (*icchā*) in *Brahman*, which is synonymous with the appearance of the Cosmic Mind (*manas*). This is to be known as *rajoguṇa*. The other two powers (*śaktis*) which follow, are known respectively as the power of action (*kriyā-śakti*), also called *ahaṁkāra*, and the power of knowledge (*jñāna-śakti*), also called *buddhi*, identified with the quality of *tamas* and pure *sattva* respectively. These three *guṇas, i.e.*, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, symbolise the three aspects of Supreme *Māyā*, viz., *Mahā-māyā*, *Yoga-māyā*, and *Bhoga-māyā*, and are related in the same order to the centres known as *ajñā-cakra, soma-cakra* or *māyā-cakra*, and *ādhāra-cakra*. This is followed, in the course of a steady spiritual elevation, by a reversal of the positions of *Bhoga-māyā* and *Mahā-māyā* in respect to the centres concerned. *Bhoga-māyā* or *Śuddha-sattva* is now located in *ājñā-cakra*, and begins to serve as transparent mirror, viz., the Mirror of the Mind (*citta-darpaṇa*) in which *Para Brahman* is reflected and the image of Pure Consciousness floats before the mind (*cidābhāsa*).

Śyāmācaraṇa on Creative Process and the Human Soul :

The entire cosmic process is then described in the light of the above basic formulations, with details that are extremely intricate and complex. With our professed aim of pinpointing only the pith of the matter, we think we need not enter into these details. It is enough to say that in this process which involves the activity of the cosmic sound, the various monads come into being. That is, *Jīva*, *Īśvara*, and *Antaryāmin* or *Draṣṭā* make their first appearance. The manifestation of the personal soul embodied in the human body, *i.e.*, *Jīva* as a modification of the first of the Trinity, the Creator and the Father-God in the Hindu pantheon, *Brahmā*, takes place in *mūlādhāra* out of the *rājasika* currents of *Mahā-māyā*. The manifestation of *Īśvara*, as modification of *Viṣṇu*, God, the Preserver, occurs in the *maṇipūra* out of the *sāttvika* current of *Mahā-māyā*. The manifestation of *Brahman* as Witness (*Sākṣin*), through the modification of *Śiva* conceived as Time (*kāla*), takes place in *Māyā-cakra* out of the *tāmasika* current of *Mahā-māyā*. This stage, through gradual spiritual evolution, is followed by the withdrawal of *Jīva* from *mūlādhāra* into *maṇipūra* with the sound *so*, and is combined with the *sāttvika* current of *Īśvara*. It is thus evident that both *Jīva* and *Īśvara* are potentially in the same current. The current of *Īśvara*, which flows from *Māyā-cakra* to *maṇipūra*, is independent of *Yoga-māyā*, and represents a quarter of the entire Consciousness (*Caitanya*), holding in it the entire universe with all its planes and sub-planes.

Even by reducing the materials gleaned from our source book to their maximum simplicity, we are afraid we have not been entirely successful in making these bare essentials intelligible to the common reader. Yet, we think, if the above is intelligently and carefully gone through, in the light of our analysis of the mystic faith and experience, as found in the earlier chapters of this work, many of the problems will be cleared up, and the difficulties of understanding resolved. Lest there should be clumsy repetition, we have not tried to re-introduce the formulations here.

There is an elaborate analysis in the works of the Brahmacārin Harinārāyaṇa on the life of the human soul during its tenure in the mother's womb. The state of the soul immediately before birth differs greatly from what it turns into after the birth takes place. With the beginning of the normal respiratory process, the position of *kuṇḍalinī*, about which we have spoken in the previous chapters, undergoes a change, and in fact is reversed altogether. With this reversion, there originates a false sense of identity with the body and all that it logically implies. The self-forgetfulness of the soul, and its consequent identification with the material vesture, mark the beginning of the mundane life, a life of unceasing error. The *Jīva* and *Īśvara* currents become now separated, though they retain the tendency of uniting together again, and form a common stream. But the unhelpful mechanism of the body does not make it possible. The great *yogin* says that it is to unify the two streams of *Jīva* and *Īśvara*,

and remove all limitations enforced upon the soul, that the guidance of a dependable and genuine *Guru* is needed. The *Guru*, in the highest sense of the term, is really the Supreme Reality, though in the usual sense of the term he stands for a human being in conscious touch with the Absolute, or at least invested with an authority which belongs to the Highest.

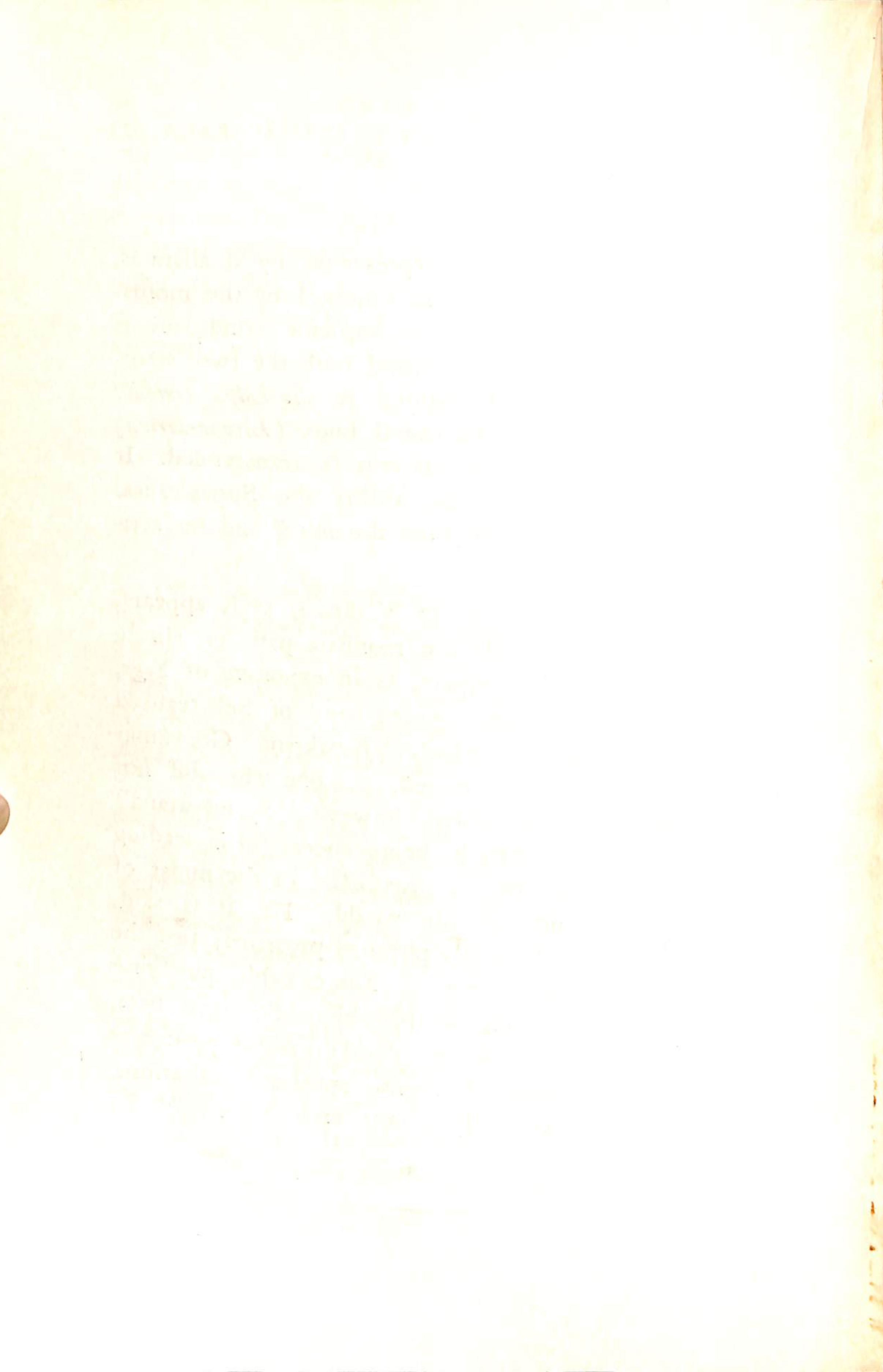
Śyāmācaraṇa on Initiation (Dīkṣā) :

The most important function of the *Guru* is to produce a revolutionary effect upon the disciple through the act of initiation. Initiation (*dīkṣā*) is an intimate process of transformation employed by the *Guru*. There are three successive courses of *dīkṣā* called (*i*) *Cakṣuḥ-dīkṣā*, (*ii*) *Mantra-dīkṣā*, and (*iii*) *Sparśa-dikṣā*. The first, viz., *Cakṣuḥ-dīkṣā* helps in the transcendence of the navel centre and harmonises the opposite movements of *prāṇa* and *apāna*. The second, viz., *Mantra-dīkṣā*, takes place after the transcendence of the navel centre referred to above. The position of *kuṇḍalinī* is now reversed, so as to enable it to attain its original status. During this period, the action of *Oṁkāra*, technically called *Uccāraṇa* by Śyāmācaraṇa, becomes normal to the soul. On the strength of this, the elimination of the three *guṇas* becomes possible. The third, viz., *Sparśa-dīkṣā*, is intended to lead the soul to its original divine home, above the qualities of Nature (*prakṛti*).

The Supreme State :

The state of ignorance represented by dualism is, according to the Brahmacārin, followed by the monistic state of knowledge. The supreme condition is that of *Vijñāna*, which is beyond both the two states mentioned above. It corresponds to *nirvikalpa samādhi* and *jīvanmukti*. When the causal body (*kāraṇa-śarīra*) disappears, the world of relations is transcended. It is this which is otherwise called the Supra-causal (*turīyātīta*) condition beyond the mind and its activities.

Śyāmācaraṇa, the saint of Vārānasi, as it appears, followed in its essentials the monistic path of Hindu theology; and in this respect, as an exponent of *Yoga*, he belonged to the same golden band of Self-realised saints as the one to which Vijayakṛṣṇa Gosvāmin and Santadāsa Bābājī belonged. As one who did not accept the monastic order, however, Śyāmācaraṇa's life differed from theirs, he being successful in leading the life of a free man, a *jīvanmukta* in the midst of the confusing hum of the world. He, it is said, exuded spirituality from his physical presence; just the sight of him would have an indescribable purifying and elevating effect on the beholder. So have been all the great mystics of the world: great repositories of the magnetic spell of intense spiritual realisations. Śyāmācaraṇa was certainly a sage and a saint of the highest order.



APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Quotations in Devanāgarī Script

For the facility of correct reference, the Saṁskrit and vernacular quotations transliterated in Roman script throughout the book have been collected here and rendered in Devanāgarī script according to chapter.

Chapter I

P. 51-52. "चतु:षष्टिश्च तन्त्राणि मातृणामुत्तमानि च ।
महामायाशम्बरं च योगिनीजालशम्बरम् ॥
तत्त्वशम्बरकं चैव भैरवाष्टकमेव च ।
बहुरूपाष्टकं चैव यामलाष्टकमेव च ॥
चन्द्रज्ञानं मालिनी च महासंमोहनं तथा ।
वामजुष्टं महादेवं वातुलं वातुलोत्तरम् ॥
हृद्भेदं तन्त्रभेदं च गुह्यतन्त्रं च कामिकम् ।
कलावादं कलासारं तथान्यत्कुण्डिकामतम् ॥
मतोत्तरं च वीणाख्यं त्रोतलं त्रोतलोत्तरम् ।
पञ्चामृतं रूपभेदं भूतोड्डामरमेव च ॥

II–40(45 2/125–72)

P. 51-52. कुलसारं कुलोड्डीशं कुलचूड़ामणिस्तथा ।
सर्वज्ञानोत्तरं चैव महाकालीमतं तथा ॥
अरुणेशं मोदिनीशं विकुण्ठेश्वरमेव च ।
पूर्वपश्चिमदक्षं च उत्तरं च निरुत्तरम् ।
विमलं विमलोत्थं च देवीमतमतः परम् ॥"

—शंकराचार्य : सौन्दर्यलहरी, Verse 31, लक्ष्मीधरा

P. 67. 'साकार रूप देखा जाय, आबार अरूप ओ देखा जाय ।'

—रामकृष्ण कथामृत

P. 68. ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवान् इति शब्द्यते ।

—भागवत

P. 90. क्रीडतो वालकस्यैव क्रीडं तस्य निशामय ।

—विष्णुपुराण

P. 113. आत्मा त्वं गिरिजा मतिः सहचराः प्राणाः शरीरं गृहम् ।
पूजा ते विषयोपभोगरचना निद्रा समाधिः स्थितिः ॥
सञ्चारः पदयोः प्रदक्षिणविधिः स्तोत्राणि सर्वा गिरो ।
यद्यत्कर्म करोमि तत् तदखिलं शम्भो तवाराधनम् ॥

—शंकराचार्य-स्तोत्र

P. 117. "भितर थेके महावायु गर् गर् करे उठे माथार दिके जाय
तखन यदि समाधि हय, भगवानेर दर्शन हय ।" (Bengali).

—रामकृष्ण कथामृत, I. 127.

P. 129. "किन्तु कुलकुण्डलिनीर जागरण ना हले चैतन्य हय ना ।" (Bengali).

—रामकृष्ण कथामृत, V.p.59.

P. 169. 'एसव शुधु कथा नय, निजे देखेछि ।'

—कुलदानन्द ब्रह्मचारी : सद्गुरुसंग, III. P. 243.

P. 172. ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवान् इति शब्द्यते ।

—भागवत

P. 186. पंगु लंघयते गिरिम् ।

P. 212. शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम् ।

—कालिदास : कुमारसम्भव

Chapter II

P. 256. न मे पार्थास्ति कर्त्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।
नानावाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त्त एव च कर्मणि ।।

—गीता, III.22.

P. 277. चौराशिलक्षयोनि भ्रमण करिया एकवारई मनुष्य जन्म हय ।

—कुलदानन्द ब्रह्मचारी : सद्गुरु संग

P. 289. क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन दृष्टे परावरे ।

—मुण्डकोपनिषद, II.ii.8.

Chapter III

P. 318. कबीर धारा अगम को सद्गुरु दोइ लखाय ।
उलट ताहि सुमिरण करो स्वामी-संग मिलाय ।। (Hindi)

—कबीर

Chapter IV

P. 344. नाल्पे सुखमस्ति भूमैव सुखम् ।

—छान्दोग्योपनिषद्, VII. 23.1.

Chapter V

P. 388. जेई नाम सेइ कृष्ण भज निष्ठा करि।
नामेर सहित आछेन आपनि श्री हरि।। (Bengali)

—जगद्बन्धु : बन्धुकथा, p. 296

P. 425. ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत् किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्

—ईशोपनिषद् I.

Chapter VII

P. 431. तू मुझे क्यों सताता है ? देख ! मैंने तेरे लिये अपनी जान सालिव पर दी । (Hindi Tran.)

—हाईलर : गॉसपेल अफ साधु सुन्दर सिंह, (English) P. 42.

P. 445. येन केन प्रकारेण मनः कृष्णे निवेशयेत्

P. 450. आविर्भूतप्रकाशानामनुपद्रुतचेतसाम् ।
अतीतानागतज्ञानंप्रत्यक्षन्न विशिष्यते ।।

—भर्तृहरि : वाक्यपदीय, I. 37.

Chapter VIII

P. 481. तोमार निश्चय परमात्मा दर्शन हइवे । (Bengali)

—सन्तदास बाबाजीर डायरी (Bengali).

भगवान् निश्चय अहर्निशि छायार न्याय तोमार संगे-संगे आछेन । (Bengali)

—सन्तदास बाबाजीर डायरी (Bengali).

P. 489. आत्मसंस्थं मनः कृत्वा न किञ्चिदपि चिन्तयेत्

—गीता, VI. 25.

P. 494. प्रणवोधनुः शरो हि आत्मा
ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते ।
अप्रमत्तेन वेद्धव्यं
शरवत्तन्मयो भवेत् ॥

—मुण्डकोपनिषद्, II. ii. 4.

P. 505. यत्र सर्वमात्मैवाभूत् तत्र केन कं पश्येत् ।

P. 510. आदौ गुरौ न्यसेत् प्राणानात्मानं धनमेव च ।
सर्वसम्बन्धविषयं कृत्वा सेवेत नित्यशः ॥
देहेन्द्रियमनः प्राणैर्भार्यां हित्वा समाहितः ।
भृत्यं पुत्रवत् सेवेत प्रियान्मित्रवत् तथा ॥
या देया गुरुणा विद्या भवसम्बन्धध्वंसिनी ।
तां तदुक्तेन मार्गेण धारयेद्वैष्णवोत्तमः ॥

—सन्तदास बाबाजी : गुरु-शिष्यसंवाद
(Second Edition, pp. 199-200).

Chapter IX

P. 539. अथाहमन्यतस्फुरति प्रकृष्टम् ।
नाहङ्कृतिस्तत्परमेव नाहङ्कृति पूर्वम् ।।

—कापाली शास्त्री : सद्दर्शनभाष्य, Verse, 22.

P. 539. ऐश्वर्यमीश्वरत्वं हि तस्य नास्ति पृथक्स्थितिः ।
पुरुषे धावमानेपि छाया तमनुधावति ।।

P. 540. अनन्तशक्तिरैश्वर्यं निष्यन्दाश्चाणिमादयः ।
स्वस्येश्वरत्वे संसिद्धे सिद्धयन्ति स्वयमेव हि ।।

—सुरेश्वराचार्य : दक्षिणामूर्ति-वार्तिक, X. 4–5.

P. 542. जीवन्मुक्तस्य कालेन तपसः परिपाकतः ।
स्पर्शाभावेऽपि सिद्धस्याद्रूपे सत्यपि कुत्रचित् ।।
भूयश्च परिपाकेन रुपाभावोऽपि सिद्धयति ।
केवलं चिन्मयो भूत्वा स सिद्धोविहरिष्यति ।।

—वशिष्ठ गणपति मुनि : रमणगीता, XIV. pp. 9–10.

P. 544. एतस्यामवस्थायां कैवल्यं भवतीश्वरस्यानीश्वरस्य वा विवेकजज्ञानभागिन इतरस्य वा, न हि दग्धक्लेशवीजस्य ज्ञाने पुनरपेक्षा काचिदस्ति, सत्त्वशुद्धिद्वारेणैतत्समाधिजमैश्वर्यञ्च ज्ञानञ्चोपक्रान्तम्...परमार्थतस्तु ज्ञानादर्शनं निवर्त्तते । तस्मिन्निवृत्ते न सन्त्युत्तरे क्लेशाः...क्लेशभावात्कर्म विपाकाभावः ...चरिताधिकाराश्चैतस्यामवस्यां गुणा न पुरुषस्य पुनर्दृश्यत्वेनोपतिनिष्ठन्ते, तत्पुरुषस्य, कैवल्यं, तदा पुरुषः स्वरुपमात्रज्योतिरमलः केवली भवति ।

—योगसूत्रभास्य, III. 55.

Chapter X

P. 570. "एहि भावनायं भायं एहि यं सं तानि तायं
भावनामयं भवभयहरणं हे
यस्मिस्तहं भाग पौं हं वां क्रीं आं हे
भा हां हि हौं हं हीं वं लं यं सं त्वं
तादरो भाद सं वं लं हे देव भक्तमयं मम हे ।
स त्वं हि हं यं वं वायं कं भावभक्ति· · · · भावमयं हे ।
महात्मायं भवभयं हर हे ।
दैवतं मयं मे सं तं हीं भक्तस्वम् भवोऽयं
य स्तानि त्वं तारणमयम् भवभयनाशं भावयं हे ।
स्यभावशरणगतं प्रणवजासनं ।
भवानी भवं भवभयनाशं हे ।
हरशरणागतः· · · · · · · · तायं
विभाक्तः ममायनं हे ।

—भाईजी : मातृदर्शन, p.48.

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